

Genealogy of a Cobblestone House

4625 Lewis Road, Walworth
Wayne County, New York 14568 (2009)
Ron and Juanita Matteson, owners

Introduction-

This house was built in stages. The first stage was the construction of a blacksmith shop on the premises. The second stage was the conversion of the cobblestone structure to a residence by the addition of a larger two-story attachment sometime later, perhaps 10 to 20 years later. Most cobblestone construction in upstate New York occurred in the period between 1825 and 1860. The completion of the Erie Canal in 1825 created somewhat of a construction boom, due to the population shift into the area, and started the "cobblestone era". Most cobblestone construction stopped when the Civil War started in 1861 due to a shortage of the huge amount of manpower required for this type of construction, and the cost of manpower for this type of building. We can probably assume that the "blacksmith shop" was built in the early stages of cobblestone construction, between 1825 and 1835. The rest of the house was probably built in the early part of the "middle" stages of cobblestone construction, between 1835 and 1845. The house's data in the tax assessor's office has the date of 1837 for the construction of the house, which seems reasonable, although not guaranteed. Inspection of the quality of the two parts of the house is compatible with these guesses at the dates.

Since the construction of the main part of the house, several lesser modifications have been made. A small wing of wood frame construction was added to the rear of the house to enlarge cooking and laundry requirements early-on. This was torn down and a larger wing was added by us (Mattesons) in 1976, to include additional bedrooms, utility room, and "keeping" room with a loft.

Utilities were added incrementally in the form of electricity, telephone, water pump for the well, and in the year 2000 water mains were installed down Lewis Road and connection was made to access the water system supplied by the Wayne County Water and Sewer Authority.

1. Construction process in building cobblestone houses-

Cobblestones could be gathered from fields or the shores of the Great Lakes. The stones from both places have been smoothed by ancient lakes covering northern New York, and the current Great Lakes continue the process. The stones recovered from the shores of the current Great Lakes are of a better quality, having endured the finishing process for longer periods of time. We have been told that it was a two-day excursion to gather lake-washed stones to build a cobblestone house. One scenario is that men (and boys) would take the horse-drawn wagon north to Lake Ontario (about 8 miles up what is now Route 350). They would gather stones for the rest of the day, and spend the night there. The next morning they would finish filling the wagon with stones and travel back to the construction site. Sometimes it would take as long as three years of multiple repetitions of this routine to collect enough stones to allow building to proceed. It has also been said that three houses were usually built at the same time; the workmen would then rotate around the three houses, allowing for time for the lime-based mortar to set properly at each house before coming back to it. Figures 1 and 2 show some close-up views of the cobblestone construction.



Figure 1. Stone construction



Figure 2. Stone construction close-up view

2. Blacksmith Shop-

Helpful information about the construction of the house was discerned by Mr. Ken Artl, a certified cobblestone mason, who was asked to inspect the premises on April 3, 2009. His inspection was what led to the conclusion that the cobblestone structure was built in two stages. The first stage was the building of a one-story barn with a large door all along the north side of the building. A huge, very strong hemlock beam crosses the north wall of our dining room to indicate that it was the top of the large barn door frame, and that our dining room was at first a barn. Figures 3 and 4 show this beam as it exists in our current dining room. The “barn” was made with a crude form of cobblestones, large and uneven, still visible on the south wall of the house. We have seen references in the census records and plat maps that there was a blacksmith shop near this location, and this barn was probably the shop! As a matter of fact, the last person I could find in the chain of deeds for the property was Clair Warren, with an occupation listed for him of “blacksmith” in the 1880 US census.



Figure 3. Beam in current dining room



Figure 4. Another view of beam in current dining room

3. Cobblestone House-

The rest of the cobblestone house was built to be more elaborate, using smaller cobbles in a more orderly fashion. It was probably added around 1837, and joined to the blacksmith shop. At the time of building the addition, the east wall of the barn (front of house) was resurfaced with smaller stones to better match the “new” part of the cobblestone house. You can see the

difference in construction by looking at Figures 5 and 6. The living room wall is made with smaller stones of better quality than the dining room (former blacksmith shop). The quoins on the front of the dining room look like they have been replaced with new quoins, and the old quoins have been used in other places on the rear corners of the two-story new part of the house. This is where one of the old quoins was discovered to have the date of 1837.



Figure 5. SE Corner of Dining Room
(former blacksmith shop)



Figure 6. SE Corner of Living Room

Lintels over the two windows and front door of the 2-story wing are made with 10 vertical slabs of cut stone, each. Lintels over the blacksmith shop windows and door are wood.

Cobbles on the front of the blacksmith shop are 2.5" with a v-shaped horizontal mortar joint between courses, and 4 courses per quoin. Cobbles on the south side of this section are large, at least 3" in diameter, but still 4 courses per quoin.

Cobbles on the front (east) side of the two-story wing are 1.5" in diameter, with 5 courses per quoin. Cobbles on the north side of this wing are 2.5", 4 courses per quoin.

Quoins at all three corners on the front of the house are cut stone, tooled to make patterned edges and sides. Quoins on the back corners are cruder, darker in shade, and not tooled, another indication that the house was built in two stages. These crude quoins were probably salvaged from the blacksmith shop during the addition.

It is hard to tell the differences between the rear of the 2-story wing and the rear of the blacksmith shop, but you can almost see a seam between the two sections. Large flat stones (10-15" in diameter) were used as the facing on the rear wall. Figure 7 shows the exterior or the blacksmith rear wall, in its modern reincarnation as a kitchen. A partial view of the current dining room (old blacksmith shop) can be seen through the doorway.



Figure 7. Rear wall of old blacksmith shop (now an interior wall of the current keeping room).

There was also a basement included under the two-story wing. The basement floor and coating on the south wall of the basement under the cobblestone house are Portland cement, indicating that the floor and wall coating were added in the 1920's or between the 1st and 2nd World Wars, according to Ken.

4. Early Residents, a Trail of Deeds-

I did a deed search in the Wayne County Clerk's offices in Lyons in an attempt to determine all the residents in the house prior to our occupancy. My search was only partially successful, in that the trail of deeds only led me back to 1888. Usually, when reviewing an old deed, the deed will give a reference to the previous owner's deed and the book and page numbers in the County Clerk's offices where this deed may be found. This useful data was missing from the 1888 deed, unfortunately.

In the earliest deed transaction uncovered in the Wayne County Clerk's Offices David Barton purchased the house from Clair S. & Ada A. Warren on 29 Dec 1888 for \$550 (part of lots 41 and 51). (Wayne County Clerk Deeds Book 154, Page 383 (154/383)). A "Clarence" Warren was found listed in a Walworth 1875 census source, who was 19 at the time of the census and a farm laborer. This person is probably Clair S. Warren, the owner who owned the house prior to 1888. A census check shows that Clair Warren was a resident in 1880, was 24 years of age, and had the profession of "blacksmith". This would have made him 32 years old when he sold the house to the Bartons.

A search of mortgage records in the County Clerk's offices showed that Clair S. Warren received mortgage funds for the property in 1882, showing that he lived here at least since then. One other record, an 1874 plat map of Walworth, indicated that an E. C. Wells lived on the property at that time. It is not known if he owned the house or rented it. No record of mortgages or deeds could be found under that name.

Wm. H. McCrea purchased the house from Abbie M. Barton Hind & Harry T. Hind on 11 Feb. 1899 for \$450 (part of lots 41 and 51), "South of Free Will Baptist Church". (181/265) William H. McCrea (1865-1909) and Cora A. McCrea (1867-1936) are buried in the Walworth Freewill Cemetery on Atlantic Road, near Lewis Road.

Raymond & Nora Lewis purchased the house from William H. & Cora McCrea on 1 Oct. 1907 for \$650 (part of lot 41). (208/336) (1.64 acres).

Lillie Randall purchased the house from Raymond & Nora Lewis on 1 Oct. 1926 (276/575), (part of Lot 41, 1.64 acres).

Stephen & Ruth (Dinse) Swadling purchased the house from Lillie M. Randall on 2 Apr. 1931 (294.149), (part of Lot 41, 1.64 acres).

Stephen Swadling transferred the deed to his wife Ruth on 9 June 1933 (303/43). The house was known as 209 Lewis Rd. at this time. Part of Lot 41, 1.64 acres.

David P. & Susan L. Linhares purchased the house from Ruth Swadling on 3 Aug. 1966 (578/351). Part of Lot 41, 1.64 acres.

Bruce A. & Sally J. Thomas purchased the house from David P. & Susan L. Linhares on 1 Nov. 1968 (610/356). Part of Lot 41, 1.64 acres.

Ronald G. & Juanita J. Matteson purchased the house from Bruce A. & Sally J. Thomas 16 Dec. 1976 (703/41). Part of Lot 41, 1.64 acres.

5. More about the Swadlings-

Information about this house as it existed between 1931 and 1966 was supplied to me by Mrs. June Swadling Foote of Lincoln Road, Walworth. She was a girl of seven years of age at the time of the purchase of the house by the Swadling family, and lived there with her family until she moved out about ten years later. June and her five siblings had all been born prior to their moving into this house.

Stephen and his wife Ruth Dinse Swadling lived in the house, along with their children: Eleanor Swadling (Massielye), Melvin Swadling, Bernice Swadling (Nortier), William Swadling, June Swadling (Foote), and Beulah Swadling (Ownens).

The front view of this house, facing east, as it looks now (2009) is shown in Figure 8. Another picture is shown in Figure 9, taken around 1941. The house looks very much the same

in the two pictures taken 68 years apart, with four exceptions: There are no rain gutters showing in the older photo. The shrubs are higher. The storm windows and doors have been added or changed since 1941. The addition that we added to the rear of the house shows up as a peak in the center of Figure 8. June Swadling Foote indicated that the ivy growing on the front of the house was a big nuisance, and threatened to come in the second story windows. They had to pull it down periodically, as do we.



Figure 8. Present view of cobblestone house, front view (2009 photo)



Figure 9. Picture of house circa 1941

When Mrs. Foote's family (Swadlings) bought the house in 1931 it had been abandoned for a "long" time, and was overgrown with honeysuckle; there was considerable deterioration in the living room floors, etc. It was rather unimpressive at that time. Figure 10 shows a picture taken at the rear of the house, and shows a vintage car and a garage that was attached to the rear of the house a few years after the Swadlings moved in.

Pot belly stoves were used for a while for heating, until Mr. Swadling installed a coal-fired furnace.

Mrs. Swadling had a green thumb, and had many rose bushes along the south property line, and around the house. There were also many fruit trees - apples, sweet cherries, sour cherries, peach, apricot, and several pear trees. Peonies across the back, and a rock garden were maintained. The wisteria she cultivated still exists near the SE corner of the house.



Figure 10. Picture of house circa 1940 and Mr. Swadling

The front yard settled a lot while the Swadlings were here due to its prior use as a dumping area, and a lot of fill had to be added.

Another small addition was added behind the kitchen addition. This space was equipped with a gas-driven washing machine with two tubs. All water was carried at that time. Water was carried from the well in the "valley" (low spot in the front yard near the road). This well frequently ran dry in late summer, and they carried water from the neighbors about ¼ mile north. They also had an "egg-shaped" cistern (fed by rain water) under the addition, and a pump on the kitchen sink to draw water from that.

A full basement was already there under the living room and den when Swadlings acquired the house. It had a dirt floor and no furnace. Heat was by the wood stove in the living room and a cook stove in the kitchen part of the addition. The chimney for the wood stove in the living room went up the wall between the parents' bedroom (now used as a den) and the living room. Mr. Swadling put a coal stove in the basement, and eventually converted to oil.

The stairs to the second floor are unchanged from the original. There are two small bedrooms on the second floor. The two Swadling boys slept in the west bedroom and the four girls slept in the east bedroom. No closets were in the east bedroom at the time, but there was a clothes closet in the west bedroom.

The outhouse used at the time still exists, and is attached to the rear of the garage. Mr. Swadling built the garage and adjoined the outhouse for more protection. At one time, before Swadlings, there was a larger barn, which must have burned or decayed. Part of the foundation still exists behind the present garage.

At one time there was a small garage at the rear of the old wing, which was entered by small cars at right angles to the driveway.

Mr. Swadling's parents lived on Swadling Rd. at one time, and that road was named after them. A Lewis family lived in this house (cobblestone) at one time before the Swadlings, and Lewis Rd. was named after them.

Owners previous to the Swadlings had built a wood-frame addition on the back of the house that contained the kitchen, bathroom, and small bedroom (Figures 11 and 12). The initial location of the rear door of the house was at the west end of the addition. Mr. Swadling moved it to the south side.



Figure 11. Old wing, looking from the southwest

6. More about the Linhares residential period-

The Linhares family purchased the house in 1966 from the Swadlings and made improvements to the home. Linhares added a new deeper well near the driveway and road. An electric water pump was added to pull water from the new well, and modern kitchen and bathroom facilities were installed in the old frame addition. Mr. Linhares also added sub-flooring to the dining room area.



Figure 12. Old wood frame wing (and Jeff, Thomas's dog), looking from the northwest

7. Thomas residential period-

The Thomas's purchased the house in 1968. They in turn made major improvements to modernize the house. Most of the interior walls and ceilings were replaced, windows were replaced (but retaining the original glass), insulation was added, and much of the woodwork in the first and second floors was updated. Thomas's also added cabinets and a new ceiling in the dining room, and considerable refinishing of woodwork, doors and floors. They also added additional closets on the second floor for clothing and linen. They added plastered walls and insulation. They added zoned heating runs for the furnace, electrical wiring in the stone part of the house, and a hot water heater.

The following comments were supplied by Mrs. Sally Thomas in 2009:

"I have been trying to think of any history I know...came up short (as I was raising babies, and 're-doing' the house). I do have some anecdotes that might be interesting to you. When we bought the house in 11/68 it was unimpressive to say the least. The plaster walls were crumbling, wallpaper was falling off, dropped ceiling falling down now and then, snow and rain coming in through the windows and it was downright dreary. BUT with potential! The first thing we did was to take the ivy off the stones as it was growing behind the stones. Some of the vines were 2 inches thick and it was a job! We did have to have the corner of the house by the wisteria re-pointed up. In 1970 came the big demolition, with a house wrecking party. All the old plaster in the living room, dining room, den and #2 bedroom were gutted as well as the false ceilings. Peter was 7 months at this time and we literally lived in rubble for 6 months. I wanted new windows before I brought Peter home from the hospital on 11/10/70 and just before we came home Bruce cleaned up about 4 inches of wood stuff on the floor, but, they were in! The windows were hand made by Glenn (Young) and he recycled all the existing glass. They were beautiful AND they worked. The original plaster walls could not keep paint or wallpaper on them because there was no barrier or insulation. We had urethane insulation blown in and the walls re-plastered by two Irish fellows. ...Patty O'Keefe and Patty McGee. The walls were gray for 5 months so they could cure. All we had in the rooms were our beds, one couch and the TV. Peter and I (not even one yet) lived in the small kitchen and laundry room. This was not a great time in my life. With demolition we found some very wide boards in the wall, particularly at the top of the cellar stairs from 16-20 inches in width. We kept some of these and later made a drop leaf table from them. People think the boards were beech. It is still in my dining room.

"We opened up the ceiling in the dining room. Originally there was a storage area one could get to from the stairs. The built-in glass doors in the dining room china closet were from an old Episcopal church house in Palmyra. . . We kept some stained glass ones and Peter has a huge one three stories up in his new post and beam house which he helped to build. His house has two lofts one above the other so the window is readily seen. I carried that huge window around for 34 years! We did dig up a lot of old glasses and relics in the gardens, down by the rock garden and behind the existing old barn. That was always an adventure!

"We were using the old dug well out front and, by the way, we never ran out of water."

8. Matteson period-

We acquired this house from Thomas's in 1976, realizing that the small bedrooms would be inadequate. In 1976-1977 we tore down the wood frame extension on the rear of the house and rebuilt as follows:

- A large second basement was excavated as a foundation for a new larger wing.
- The new wing was added, shown in Figure 13, with kitchen, keeping room, two bedrooms and bathroom with both a shower and a bathtub (found left in the old basement, which still housed the oil furnace). The new wing also has a loft for additional sleeping space, and a utility room for laundry. A second stairway to the basements is accessible from the laundry room. Solid oak floors were used in the new wing to be compatible with the rest of the house.
- Electric and plumbing facilities were added for the above, including a sump pump in the new basement, and a septic tank and leach bed for the new bathroom.
- The oil-based heating system was extended to add new hot water zones to heat the new rooms.



Figure 13. New wood frame wing on west side of house

In the years following our occupation of the house in 1977 we made further improvements to the building:

- An enclosed side porch was added to protect the north entrance to the new wing (Figures 14 and 15).
- An enclosed solar room was added on the south side of the new wing (Figure 16).
- The oil furnace was replaced with a new one.
- A central air conditioning system was installed, with central electric heat capability.



Figure 14. North entrance before enclosing



Figure 15. North entrance after enclosing

A couple of master craftsmen worked on the various modifications to the original building and must be mentioned: Glenn Young from Newark worked on many of the interior modifications and helped with the design and construction of the new wing added in 1976-1977. A tinsmith named Judd Rice, who had his shop in Alway, created and built tin light fixtures for the house, probably prior to 1970.



Figure 16. Solar room on south side of house.

Figure 17 shows the house in a winter scene.



Figure 17. Winter scene

9. Utilities-

Electricity: Electric utility poles were installed on Lewis Road a few years after Swadlings moved in, and this house was connected to the poles shortly after (estimated at 1940).

Telephone Service: Telephone service was also installed while Swadlings lived in the house.

Water Mains: Water mains were installed on Lewis Road by the Wayne County Water & Sewer Authority after we moved in 2000, and we connected quickly, eliminating any future well and water pump problems.

10. Lewis Road residents-

When looking through census reports, plat maps, etc. from the 1800's I uncovered the names of many former residents who lived up and down Lewis Road. Figure 18 shows a fragment of an 1853 plat map located in the Wayne County Historian's office. A lot of the names will sound familiar to Walworth residents. Some of the names were as follows:

1853 Map in Wayne County Historian's Office- J. Brown, J. Andrew, J. Cady, T. Mitchell, DG Holmes, R. Cunningham (smith shop), Artemus Mathewson, W. Straight, M. Hunt (blacksmith), smith shop, P. Mathewson, R. Hill, schoolhouse.

1858 Gillettes Wall Map in Wayne County Clerk's office- I. Brown, J. Brown, J. Andrew, J. Andrew, T. Mitchell, DC Holmes, Mrs. Boynton, A. Mathewson, W. Tripp, M. Hunt (blacksmith), blacksmith shop, P. Mathewson, C. A. Boynton, Mrs. Bancroft, School House #5.

1860 Census- Harvey Foster, Harry S. Linnbacher, T. Mitchell, George Warren, A. Mathewson, William Tripp, Micajah Hunt (blacksmith), Perrygreen Mathewson, Charles Boynton, Cynthia Mathewson.

1865 Census- Oscar Harris, Thomas Mitchell, Jesse Brown, James Andrews, Edward Burs, George Warren, Perrygreen Mathewson.

1870 Census- Edwin Bounds, Germain Andrew, Ira W. Brown, WS Westgate, George Warren (father of Clair), Hiram Mathewson, William Tripp, George McFarland, Perrygreen Mathewson, Dexter Dresser.

1874 Map- J. Bullen, E. Bounds, R. Birdsell, Jemain Andrews, Baptist parsonage, J. Brown, G. Warren, A. Mathewson, W. Tripp, EC Wells, D. Dresser, D. Dresser, E. Dresser, schoolhouse.

1875 Census- Edwin Bounds, Thomas Birdsell, Jemain Andrews, Ira Brown, Hiram Mathewson, Justus Brown, William Tripp, Alzora Wells, P. G. Mathewson, Dexter Dresser, schoolhouse.

1880 Census- Thomas Birdsell, Ellen F. Roberts, Jemain Andrews, Philinda and Frank Brown, Isaac Daansen, George Warren, Hiram Mathewson, William Tripp, Henry Albright, John Albright, P. Mathewson, Dexter Dresser.

1892 Census- David Stebbins, George Warren, Isaac Daansen, George Flemming, William

McCray, Amanda Tripp, Atwood Burrows, Perrygreen Mathewson, Dexter Dresser.

1904 Map- Rolland, T. Birdsell, J. Andrew, N. Lewis, I. Daansen, J. Daansen, I. Daansen, Mrs. H. Durfee, W. McCrea, P. Mathewson, LE Dresser, School #8.

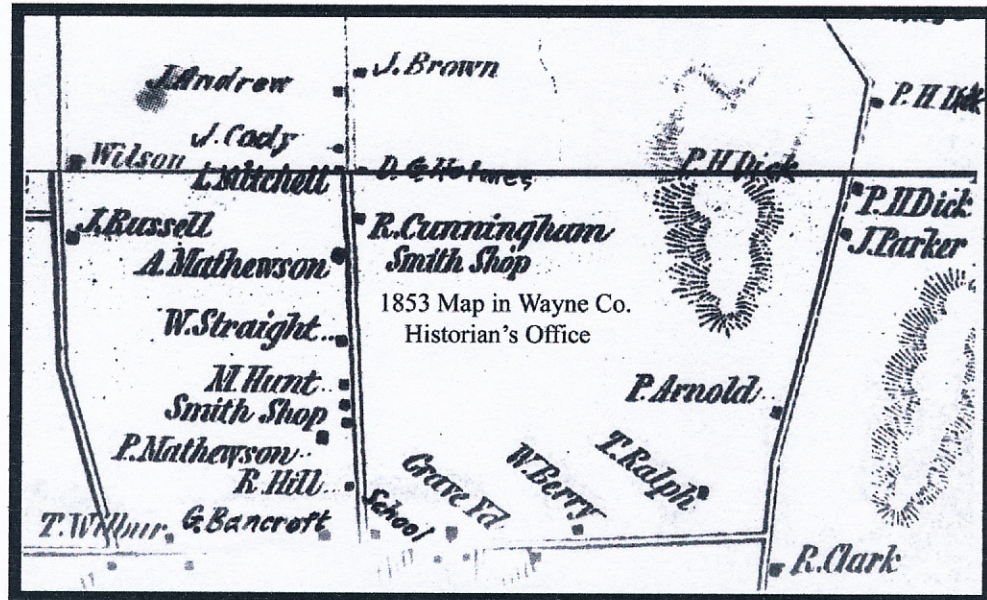


Figure 18. Fragment of 1853 plat map showing southern end of Lewis Road

11. Freewill Cemetery, final residences-

Another interesting search I made was to look through all the Walworth cemetery books in the Walworth-Seely Public Library in order to find former Lewis Road residents who are buried in Walworth. It appears that almost all the former Lewis Road residents who are buried in Walworth are in the Freewill Cemetery on Atlantic Avenue (Figure 19, George Warren grave site). This makes sense, since this cemetery is located on Atlantic Road only a few feet east of the intersection of Lewis Road and Atlantic Road, and directly across Atlantic Road from the original location of the First Freewill Baptist Church. I also visited the cemetery and located most of the names in the Freewill Cemetery book at the Library. Some familiar Lewis Road names in the Freewill Cemetery and their dates of death are as follows:

Jemain Andrew 1857, Alex Andrew, Hon. Jonathan Boynton 1845, Charles Brown 1882, Jesse Brown 1869, Dexter Dresser 1906, Micajah Hunt 1883, William H. McCrea 1909, Cora McCrea 1936, Leah McCrea 1926, Isaac Tripp 1872, Amanda Tripp 1878, Charles Warren 1840, George Warren 1900, Mary Ann Warren 1870, Jacob Warren 1851, James Warren 1860, Hattie Belcher 1920, George M. Wells 1867.

Several names similar to these, many of which are probably related, are also located in the Baker Cemetery on Route 441, just east of Baker and Canandaigua Roads.



Figure 19. Warren grave-site

Ron Matteson
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