

Some interesting facts about the Wilson House Restaurant & Inn & Wilson Community

In 1810, Rueben Wilson settled in what is now the Town of Wilson. Most of the area was an unbroken wilderness. Rueben fathered seventeen children, the oldest of them being Luther Wilson. **You are dining in the family home of Luther Wilson.** This beautiful cobblestone home was built in 1844 and appears, externally, much as it did when constructed.

Luther Wilson's first claim to ingenuity may have occurred during the War of 1812, when he was only 15 years of age. According to early accounts, George Ash warned the settlers that the British were coming, thus giving most of them time to gather a few belongings and flee. About 25 head of cattle were rounded up, and Luther was given the responsibility of driving them eastward along the lake. Some had cow bells around their necks, and in order to keep the invaders from hearing them, Luther stuffed dry leaves in the bells. He was then able to quietly drive the cattle beyond Van Horne's Mill where they remained undetected. After the mill was burned down and the British retreated, Luther drove the cattle back to Wilson.

When Luther reached maturity, he started the hamlet of Wilson. In 1829 a tavern and store were built. In 1834, Luther and his father built the "*Ontario House*", a beautiful cobblestone which was considered Wilson's oldest and best known hostelry. It was destroyed by fire in 1894. Luther helped develop a thriving lumber and ship building port. In 1844, Luther built an attractive cobblestone home on the site of the first log school house built in the village in 1820. The beautiful old historic home is known today as the "*Wilson House Restaurant & Inn*". It is set on the village four corners and is built of water washed cobbles with grey limestone lintels, sills and quoins. There is a circular staircase inside and some of the floors and windows and door frames as well as a pocket door are original.

In later years, this beautiful cobblestone was purchased by a group of Wilson businessmen and named the "*Wilsonian Club*". Bowling alleys were built in the basement and the second floor was used for dances. In 1947 the Wilson House was turned into a bar and restaurant and has had several owners and managements. In 2016 the property was purchased by Tim White, Chris White and Jon Pashong. They have done an extensive renovation and preservation of the original building, as you see it today.

The Lake Ontario plain extends 70 miles east and west of Rochester, NY and has the unique distinction of being known as "*The Land of Cobblestones*". For thousands of years this plain once formed the bed of old Lake Iroquois with its southern shore extending to the ridge over which Route 104 now winds. As the waters receded to their present shoreline, the lake's waves produced great quantities of smooth, rounded cobblestones, covering the plains on which future settlers would build their homes. The cobblestones were a nuisance to the farmers. The masons (mostly European immigrants, who built the Erie Canal and lost their jobs when the canal was completed in 1825), saw the possibilities of the cobbles and started to build permanent homes for settlers. The period of cobblestone masonry continued until the end of the civil war in 1865. As the building of many different structures developed mixing of mortar and shaping of sand and lime joints became a carefully guarded trade secret. The typical cobblestone wall was usually 20 or more inches thick and made of large stones in a variety of sizes. An example of these exterior cobblestone walls can be seen in the *Wilson House Restaurant and Inn*. The interior walls, in what is now the bar room, have been exposed in our recent reconstruction.

Thank you for enjoying our building & the fine food and drink which we offer.