

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian



Vol. X 5-19-88 No. 20

ARTIFACTS EDUCATE

Every year hundreds of local students visit the Cobblestone Museum at Childs, N.Y. The photo shown here depicts Janice Thaine, Deputy Historian in Gaines on the steps of the Cobblestone School speaking to Fourth Grade classes of Mrs. Swindon and Mrs. Calleri on a field trip from the Albion Middle School. For over a decade Mrs. Thaine has worked as a volunteer teacher at the historic 1849 school, literally coming in contact

with thousands of students. Other volunteers who assist in instruction are: Louis Poelma, Winifred Bentley, Jane Pearce, Ellen Jean Pickett, William B. Nestle, Judy Russell and Delia Robinson. The educational program at the museum is administered by C. W. Lattin, the museum director who also teaches visiting students about our past.

The Cobblestone Museum expands particularly upon the Fourth and Seventh Grade N.Y. State

mandated curriculum by interpreting our local history and 19th century aesthetics. When a group of students arrives at the museum, usually around 9:30, they first see the historic 1834 cobblestone church and learn about the uniqueness of cobblestone masonry in our part of New York State.

Then they see the huge collection of 19th century agriculture artifacts at Farmer Hall. This includes background on early settlement times through seeing such artifacts as a bear trap and log smoke house. Churning, shearing sheep, apple grading, facing bushels, reaping wheat, and catching mice in the better mouse trap, are all concepts brought forth there. Students also see at the Print Shop, how hand-set type was used by Herbert Hill and how printing was done on two hand-fed presses.

Likewise, the Blacksmith Shop provides a setting where visitors can see how Joe Vagg shod horses with his simple equipment consisting of a forge, anvil and hammer. Students get a sense of the 19th century home life as they visit the Ward House with its cistern pump, wood burning cook stove, kerosene lamps, stereoptican viewer and yes, even the chamber pot. Exhibits at the museum also show students a millinery, a harness shop, a country store and a collection of taxidermy to mention just a few highlights. And of course, at the school, Janice Thaine always enthalls her audience with the stories of how things were when she was a student in that very school house. By 1:30 when students usually leave, the Cobblestone Complex they have had a visit chuck full of descriptions and a handson touch with the past. Indeed a learning experience.

This, however, is only one phase of education which takes place at the museum. The other major aspect of museum service is the Cobblestone Research Center under the direction of Delia Robinson who is also the Gaines Historian. This Research Center provides materials free of charge to students and others on local history and 19th century building construction as well as preservation. Along with this, the cobblestone museum provides speakers to community organizations and has organized workshops, seminars and other educational events such as the Old Timers Fair.

On April 28, 1961 the Cobblestone Society was granted a Provisional Charter by the N.Y. State Board of Regents. In that document two important purposes were set forth: "To establish a museum and library as a headquarters for the collection and dissemination of information concerning the cobblestone art and all related aspects of regional art and history; "also" to promote public knowledge of and appreciation for the historical and architectural values of cobblestone buildings and to promote and encourage historical research in this field."

On November 17, 1967 the Cobblestone Society was granted its Absolute Charter by the N.Y. State Board of Regents. This means that the museum is a non-profit educational institution.

In 1985 the Orleans County Legislature in Resolution No. 315-1085 designated the month of October as Cobblestone Heritage month in tribute to the work in preservation and education which takes place at the Cobblestone Museum under the laws of the N.Y. State Education Department.