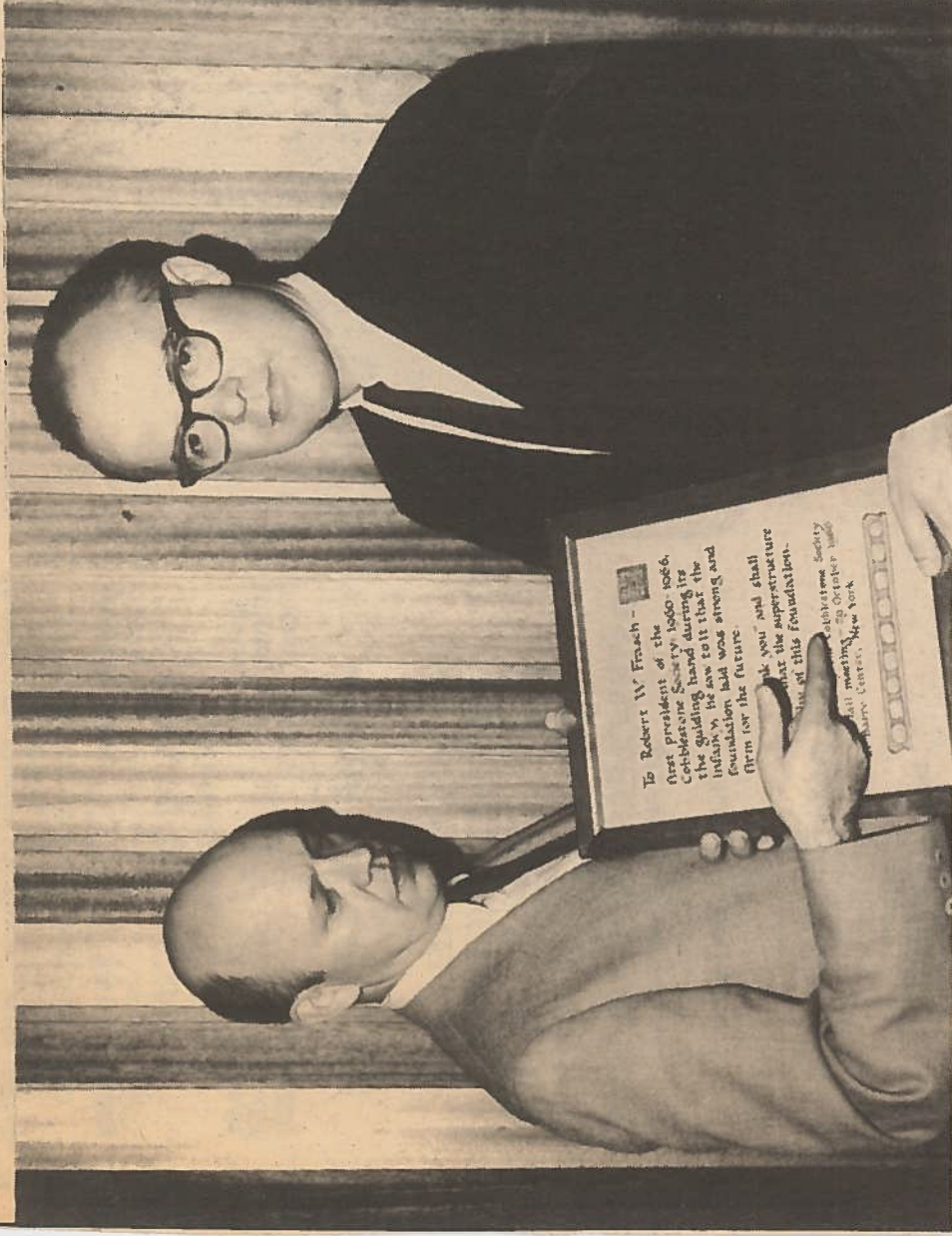


Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian



Vol. XII

No. 32

ROBERT W. FRASCH

August 16, 1934 - July 30, 1990

Regional preservationists, historians, educators and members of the Cobblestone Society were saddened this past week by the death of Robert W. Frasch. Mr. Frasch was born in Rochester, did his undergraduate work in Brockport and completed his Master's degree through the University of Rochester. He then taught social studies in Medina and Holley School systems, serving a stint in the armed forces in between these two positions. He then taught for several years at the State University College at Cortland. In 1966 he became the director of the Gannett School of the Rochester Museum of Science and Man. He belonged to many regional, State and National organizations for the preservation of history and 19th century architecture.

I first remember meeting Bob Frasch just a little

feeling the urgency to preserve the church building. Together the two of them set forth. Bob had the ideas, the foresight, the initiative, the enthusiasm and persistency to achieve his goals and dreams. My father in turn, knew all the right local people whose cooperation he encouraged. Some, as might be said, jumped on the bandwagon and also became founders of the Cobblestone Society and Museum, but it was truly Bob Frasch who conceived the idea. He became the Cobblestone Society's first president and was currently on the board of directors. When he stepped down as president in 1966 he was cited with an illuminated document thanking him for his guidance. The accompanying photo shows Robert Frasch at the right, accepting the award from his successor O. W. Shelgren, Jr. of Buffalo.

In 1985 he reflected upon his observations for the introduction of the society's 25th anniversary booklet, "To Preserve and Educate" by Della Robinson. The following excerpt in his words exemplifies his pursuits, research and teaching:

"Fortunately an increasing number of individuals shared an awareness of the very remarkable qualities of our region's cobblestone heritage. They realized that in American regional architecture cobblestone buildings stood out as a Yorker invention, a unique style of masonry wall construction reinvented and developed about 1825 along the Lake Ontario Plain. This style had occurred nowhere else in America. These same Yorker masons later took the idea westward, building at least 100 more throughout the Great Lakes in the 1850's and 1860's, as far as Wisconsin. Each cobblestone building was uniquely hand-crafted inside and out. Of the 800 or more built in New York, no two were identical. They are as distinctively "Upstate New York" as are the southwestern Spanish adobes, the New England saltboxes or Cape Cod cottages, and the southern pillared plantation houses are to their regions."

over thirty years ago and have known him strictly through the Cobblestone Society ever since. He was living in Hilton back then and teaching Social Studies in Holley. Every day on his way to school he passed unique cobblestone structures with a deepening interest and a desire to do something constructive about their preservation. As an advisor to the Holley Yorker Club he decided to have those students document all the cobblestone houses in the Town of Murray. In seeking help and planning for this project he contacted my father, Cary Lattin, who at that time was Orleans County Historian. In their first meeting Bob expressed concern over the fate of the historic Cobblestone Church at Childs and proposed the formation of a society and the creation of a cobblestone museum village there. My father was a ready listener, also

That day was October 23, 1960 and over the

next thirty years Bob never lost sight of the cobblestone mission. He collected a vast resource of information and documentation on cobblestone buildings in North America which became the basis for the Cobblestone Resource Center when it was established in 1982. He coauthored the publication of "Cobblestone Landmarks of New York State" released in 1978 and had presently edited the manuscript for yet another publication to be entitled "Preserving Cobblestone Landmarks." Space prohibits the elucidation of his further accomplishments of which there are many.

In essence, the Cobblestone Society will forever more be thankful for its father. The record of his life was entwined with our cobblestone heritage and preservation. He always acted unselfishly for a cause he viewed as a priority. There was no gentler, no stronger man in these ranks than Robert Frasch. The Cobblestone Society is grateful for having been touched by his wisdom and excellence and also indebted. Speech cannot contain our love but actions will. Here are the words of Kenneth Patton, the Unitarian-Universalist theologian:

"If the dead still live, they live in us. We have to see for them, hear for them, believe for them, act for them. When we teach the young, the dead teach through us. The only hands they have to work with are our hands. The only lips they have to speak with are our lips. Their courage and determination are now carried in our courage and determination."

"We are the ever-living dead, for the dead are ever-living in those to whom they have passed on their lives, dreams, and labors. We have not only our lives to live, but theirs also. If we do not fail them, the dead will live on. They live forever if their causes and dreams live in us and the world we build. Will they die a second time? Only we can answer. We hold their death or their everlasting life."

Indeed, through the death of Bob Frasch we in preservation are all charged with the task of carrying on his mission. If we are to carry on his love of Cobblestone heritage and his memory, we too must never lose sight of his mission for there are dreams to be dreamed and labors to be labored. He set us upon the right path in which to direct our pursuits. May we never fail to perpetuate an everlasting life for him. In so attempting this, the Cobblestone Board of Directors at its monthly meeting on August 3, 1990 "Resolved that the room in which the Cobblestone Resource Center is housed be hereafter known as the Robert W. Frasch Room." This room which adjoins the John Proctor Room on the ground floor of the Cobblestone Church is currently under reconstruction. When completed a proper dedication ceremony will take place.