

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin County Historian

Vol. XV

10-14-93

No. 37

## "MORTS" MORTAR

Pictured here is Mr. George Morton Pettit of Maple Ridge Road, Medina, standing next to an ancient mortar. Webster's Dictionary describes a mortar as "a strong vessel in which material is pounded or rubbed with a pestle." It goes without saying, that the pestle which was perhaps a small rock is long gone but the mortar remains as mute testimony to the ancient inhabitants of this area known as "Indians."

Recently Mr. Pettit has given this artifact to the Cobblestone Museum at Childs, N.Y. He also relates to us this known history about it which has been passed down in his family. The Pettits, that is, Henry who was George's great grandfather, bought their farm in the Town of Shelby in 1850. George M. Pettit is the fourth generation to grow up on this farm, preceded by his father Clark Pettit and his grandfather also named Clark Pettit. It seems that Henry Pettit discovered the mortar near a spring in the woods on his farm over a century ago. Being intrigued with this unusual hollowed-out stone, he placed it near the well pump and watering trough in the door yard. Mr. Pettit remembers vividly his dog "Shep" of many years ago using it as a water dish. He also recalls when wheat harvest came and they shocked up the bundles, that they would sometimes find arrowheads on the ground in the general vicinity of where the mortar had been discovered years before. It seems likely that perhaps some native Americans had an encampment in this area several centuries ago.

I've had Mr. Stanley Vanderlaan, local archaeologist and an authority on local Indian artifacts and lore, examine the mortar. He indicates he has never seen one quite like this and indeed, if it was a mortar, thinks it rather crude. However, he feels it is possible that it could be as much as eight hundred years old and probably represents an agrarian culture. Mortars and pestles were used



by Indians to grind corn and other grains that they raised.

This mortar appears to be made of limestone and obviously displays some tooling marks around the upper portion. It also sits flat upon the ground and would appear, because of its heavy weight, something which was intended to be more stationary, rather than moveable.