

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

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## COBBLESTONE HISTORIC DISTRICT

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HAS BEEN DESIGNATED A

#### NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK

THIS DISTRICT POSSESSES NATIONAL SIGNIFICANCE  
IN COMMEMORATING THE HISTORY OF THE  
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA

1993

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

Originating in Rochester, New York area, cobblestone construction gradually found its way northward into Canada, southward toward Pennsylvania and it also managed to skip out to Wisconsin and Illinois with the general population movement more than a decade prior to the Civil War.

Of the 700 cobblestone structures built south of Lake Ontario, these in Childs are said to be the "Best documented and best preserved." Examples of this construction style should be considered a folk art form that demands great skill and creativity from the builders.

Since the three buildings in question were not built at the same time, but during a 15-span, we 145 years later have the luxury of seeing the improvements made by craftsmen using cobblestone construction during that era. The church has field cobbles and minimal decoration, the Ward House, a slightly fancier and more complicated design and finally, the school illustrates the use of smaller stones used as a veneer, symbolic of the cobblestone era's final stages.

Citizens of the United States in general and certainly the residents of Western New York State in particular, should thank Cobblestone Society members for their long-time interest in preserving these landmarks. The society is one of many such small, usually unknown groups of dedicated people, with the burning desire and creative resourcefulness to salvage such historical gems for the rest of us to marvel at ...

Now, in order for the Cobblestone Historic District to gain coveted "Landmark" status, it had to be studied by National Park Service Historians. It had to meet three qualifications. Basically, it had to have:

1. Significance in a given field -- This structure is documented as the earliest constructed (and restored) cobblestone church in North America.

2. Association with important individuals, events or ideas -- the texture produced by size and stone color, mortar joints and craftsmen design created one of the most vibrant, original building techniques in American History.

3. Integrity -- meaning that its original and intangible national significance must remain intact -- thanks to painstaking care taken during restoration and maintenance, the three buildings look very much like they did back in the 1850s.

Potential landmarks are brought before two advisory boards of scholars and national leaders made up of: The consulting committee for the National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings and The Advisory Board on National Parks, Historic Sites, Buildings and Monuments. These boards review the N P S presentations and those properties that meet the approval of the secretary's advisory board are recommended for "Landmark" status. The actual designation is effected when the Secretary of Interior approves it.

Though the owner of a designated landmark may voluntarily agree to preserve the integrity of the landmark, he or she is not legally bound to do so. However, if the property is significantly changed or its special values are destroyed, the Secretary can and has revoked the landmark honor and reclaimed all certificates and the bronze plaque.

National Landmark designation enables the nation to recognize and pay honor to individuals, sites and structures for their part in contributing in some special way to the total American experiment -- just as we are doing here today.

In 1966, a new dimension was added to National Historic Preservation activities when the "Historic Preservation Act" established the National Register of Historic Places. The register is an exclusive master list of the nation's cultural properties that are considered most worthy of protection. Finally, designation as a National Landmark means protection as well as recognition. Automatic and simultaneous National Register Status offers protection against actions that are federally sponsored or funded, which might create an adverse effect on a listed (or eligible) historic property.

And now ... it is a pleasure for me as the National Park Service's representative this afternoon to officially proclaim and dedicate the Cobblestone Historic District as a National Historic Landmark.

On Sunday, October 24 the Cobblestone Historic District in Childs, N.Y. was dedicated as a National Historic Landmark. The three cobblestone buildings which make up this district are: the Cobblestone Church, the Ward House and the District No. 5 School. The Cobblestone Society was privileged to have a number of dignitaries attending, including Hanny Heyen for Congressman LaFalce, Sen. John Daly, Assemblyman Charles Nesbitt, County Legislature Chairman Frank Berger, County Legislators George Bower and Ted Swiercznski and Gaines Supervisor Ronald Radzinski. Cynthia Howk representing the Landmark Society of Western New York noted the very special honor of an NHL listing and that it is the only one in Orleans County.

The Cobblestone Society was also pleased to welcome Laura Rotegard representing the National Park Service. She is the Assistant Superintendent of the Womens Rights National Historical Park in Seneca Falls and gave the keynote remarks to help explain National Historic Landmark status. Here are some excerpts from Mrs. Rotegard's speech.

Rooted in the "Historic Sites Act of 1935," the National Landmarks Program became law under President Franklin Roosevelt. The Act authorized the Interior Secretary to ...

... Make a survey of historic and archeological sites, buildings and objects, to determine which possess exceptional value in commemorating or illustrating United States history," and to

... Erect and maintain tablets to mark historic or prehistoric areas and events of National historical or archeological significance."

Initially, the sites surveyed were also considered for eventual inclusion in the National Park System. But by 1960 it became evident that a vast majority of our total cultural heritage, for various reasons, could never be included in that elite corps. Now, just because such areas did not meet the lofty park service criteria, it certainly seemed unfair and rather wasteful to ignore these historical gems altogether. So, to identify such nationally significant areas and objects, to mark them and to encourage private initiative in their preservation, the "National Historic Landmark" designation was established...

There are currently 2,080 National Historic Landmarks and New York State has 218 or 10.5% of them -- more than any other single state. The first group of places selected as landmarks were so named in October of 1960. Landmarks located in your neighboring counties include:

Buffalo's State Hospital and Erie County Historical Society Building; Niagara County's Adams Power Plant House, Old Fort Niagara and the Niagara Reservation; Batavia's Holland Land Office in Genesee County and in Monroe County, Rochester's George Eastman House and Susan B. Anthony's House. A landmark certainly close to our hearts at women's rights.

The Cobblestone District Landmark we honor today dates from 1834 when local craftsmen and members of the First Universalist Society used glaciated field cobbles to build themselves a fine, Federalist-style Church here in which to worship. Six years later came the Ward House and in 1849 the school was completed.