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Remembering the Liberty Pole

Today's photo shows Cal Stinson of CLS Coatings putting the finishing touches on the Liberty Pole at the Cobblestone Museum grounds.

The large limestone block at the base states: "To The People Of Gaines, This Liberty Pole Replica Was Erected In The Year Of The Eagle, 1982 By The Cobblestone Society."

Twenty-one years have passed since any work or painting was done to this patriotic symbol, which was getting to look rather shabby. CLS was hired to repaint this by the Cobblestone Museum.

It was erected in 1982, when our country celebrated the 200th anniversary of the eagle as our national emblem. The pole is a replica of a liberty pole that once stood just north of the canal on Main Street at the Mansion House. This would have been erected in the 1850s for some political cause.

Liberty poles were our first patriotic symbols viewed as places to rally prior and during the Revolutionary War. Following this, political parties erected them to highlight

speeches. A famous pole near Route 5 south of Akron, in Erie County, was known as the "Grant Pole" and marked the place where General U.S. Grant once spoke. This artifact has since been moved to the village of Akron.

According to a newspaper account of the mid 1840s, three poles were put up in Gaines to celebrate the Fourth of July. Oftentimes, political parties tried to out do each other by putting up poles exceeding the height of the other party. At one time, a pole 80 feet high was placed on the courthouse lawn.

By the late 1800s, the popularity of liberty poles was diminishing. However, our New York State flag carries the image of one in its great seals as we see the allegorical figure Liberty holding a pole with a freedom cap on its top.

The Liberty Pole at the Cobblestone Museum continues to be a reminder of earlier times and represents our American heritage with its "big wooden eagle resting on a perch half way up."

