

Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin • County Historian



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Part IX

Riches Corners School

December 1, 1845

“Resolved that we build a new school house according to Judge Pennyman’s Plan.

Resolved that the new school house be set on the southwest corner of the school house lot.

Resolved that the school house be faced on the east side and north end back to the wood house and the east side of the wood house with lake stone and the remainder of the walls to be made of common field stone.”

January 13, 1846

“Resolved that we raise five hundred and twenty-five dollars to build a school house according to the plan adopted by the district.”

These are but four resolutions from the district minutes book relating to the building of the Riches Corners school house. The lake stones used were of the water washed flat variety laid in a diagonal fashion to create the herringbone pattern. As legend has it, Cyrus Wetherill, a local cobblestone mason, was the one who perfected the herringbone pattern. This is entirely possible because herringbone cobblestone buildings are mostly found in central Orleans County. Of the approximately 800 cobblestone buildings in America, fewer than a half dozen remain which are the herringbone pattern, a rarity indeed.

The Riches Corners school was however, one of over twenty cobblestone schools constructed in Orleans County. The popularity of cobblestone as a building material for schools may be attributed to: its availability of stone, the inexpense of construction and minimal upkeep. But the Riches Corners school house like almost a dozen others in this county is no more. Following centralization of the present Albion district, the Riches Corners school house was sold to private interests who evidently had no interest in this unique landmark, because around twenty years ago the school house was demolished to make way for a you guessed it vacant lot.

Including the dozen cobblestone schools remaining, Orleans County can boast of nearly 100 cobblestone structures. The majority of these buildings are houses but in that number can also be counted, an academy, a Quaker church, a Universalist church, an Inn, a barn, several smokehouses, a Masonic Hall and a parsonage.

Orleans County can be proud of its cobblestone heritage and the Cobblestone Society, the first organization formed to preserve and protect these buildings. Eighteen months ago the Cobblestone Society expanded its services to include the Cobblestone Resource Center which is the most complete source of information on the history and preservation of these buildings, wherever they exist in North America. Mrs. Delia Robinson, Resource Center Director is available to assist serious researchers in this field. The Cobblestone Resource Center is part of the Cobblestone Museum Complex at Childs, N.Y. which is now open daily except Mondays for the summer season.