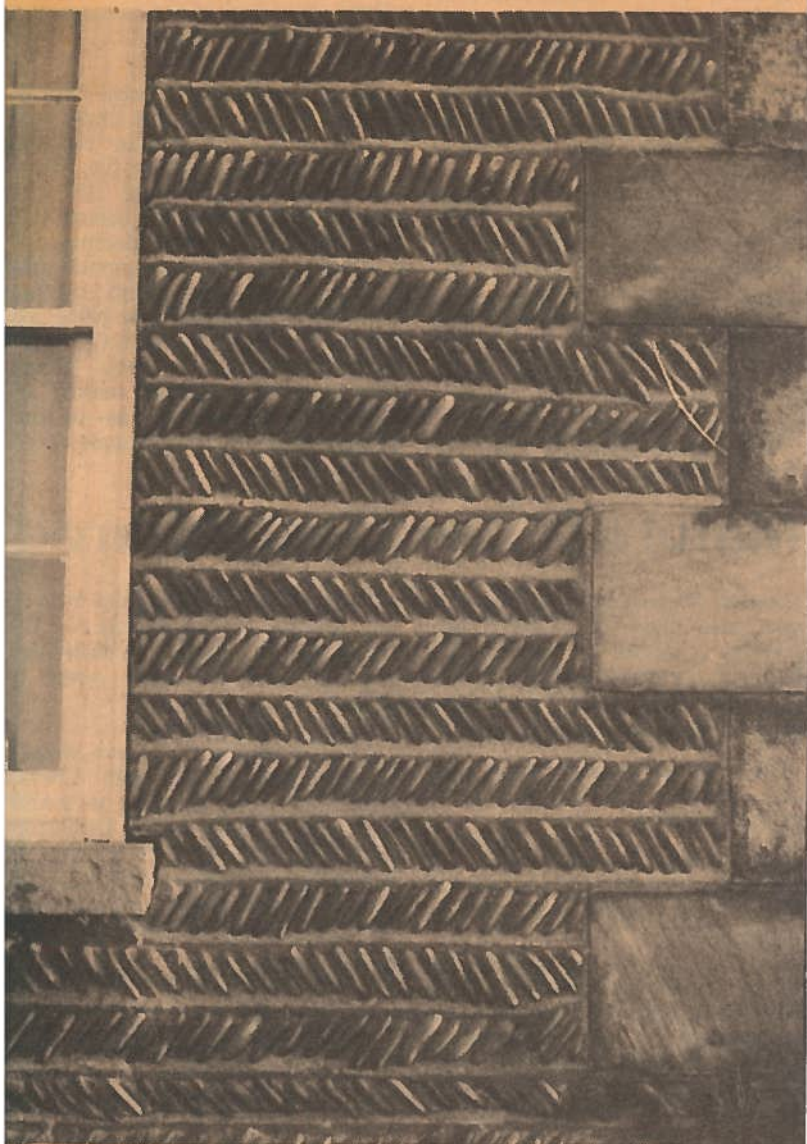


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Cobblestone Heritage Month

Just a little over a year ago the Orleans County Legislature designated the month of October as "Cobblestone Heritage Month" in Orleans County, New York. Around 800 cobblestone buildings exist in North America today with 97 of these unusual structures existing right here in Orleans County. Records indicate that some ten or so have, however, met their demise in this county. The County Legislature, with its designation of October as Cobblestone Heritage month has rightfully placed a significance and importance on this facet of our local heritage. Any owner of a cobblestone structure should certainly be proud of such an historic property. Cobblestone structures represent a masonry phenomenon which flourished particularly in New York State between 1825 and 1860. These structures either made of fieldstone (early examples) or lakewashed stone (later examples) were primarily constructed by local stone masons who mastered this extraordinary skill.

One such person was Cyrus Witherall, a cobblestone mason from the Town of Gaines. The cobblestone wall shown here is an example of Mr. Witherall's work c. 1840. Commonly called the herringbone pattern, this wall can be seen on the front of the home of Mr. & Mrs. Thomas Conroy on Ridge Road just east of the Kenyonville Road. No doubt, Cyrus Witherall built more structures in this pattern than any other cobblestone mason. Around twelve examples of this pattern appear in Orleans County but not all necessarily built by Witherall. We do however, attribute the major works in this pattern to him. Of course, flat lake washed stones were used to create this superficial effect on the exterior walls. It is interesting to note that all the herringbone examples with the exception of one, were built in Orleans County. It was here during the second quarter of the 19th century that more variations on cobblestone patterns were made than any other place in the world. Cobblestone masonry was definitely a regional art form. Masons in Wayne County for instance, made more variations in designs with various colors of stone. In other words four rows of red stone and four rows of grey stone to create a stripe effect.

By the time of the Civil War and the industrial revolution, this labor intensive form of masonry was no longer desired. It had perhaps been nothing more than a fad. But the examples of work which remain with us are testimony to labors of love, artistry and design wrought from the good earth.

To celebrate our heritage of cobblestones the Cobblestone Society will hold its annual Lamplight Program at the historic Cobblestone Church in Childs on Sunday evening, October 26. Affiliate Artist David Krakauer, Clarinetist will perform. Readings and poetry of a fall/harvest theme will also supplement the rest of the program.