

# Bethinking of Old Orleans

C.W.Lattin

County Historian



Greece

Central School District

June 17, 1987

Bill Lattin and all:

We at Brookside wish to express our thanks for the excellent handling of our classes when we visited Cobblestone Museum. Teachers and students were impressed by the polite, sensitive caring attitude of the guides as well as their

enthusiasm and knowledge. In relation to other field trip experiences we have had, we all rated your presentations very highly.

Thank you again for your efforts. You can all feel justifiably proud of the impression you leave in your students.

Sincerely,

Don Loun for  
all the teachers at Brookside

Quality Education for Today and Tomorrow

## Cobblestone And Tourism

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Aside from "Orleans County being Home of the King" through tourism's promotion of local fishing, the other obvious local tourist attention-getting is our heritage, especially in the form of cobblestone. Although it does not get top billing it does have its far reaching aspects. Of the approximately 800 cobblestone structures in North America 90% are located within a seventy-five mile radius of Rochester. Orleans County can not only boast of ninety-seven existing structures (mostly farm residences) but also of the only organization in the world, the "Cobblestone Society" which is dedicated to the preservation of these structures through research and dissemination of cobblestone information.

The Cobblestone Museum Complex at Childs, N.Y. is the headquarters for this non-profit society which was incorporated under the New York State Regents Laws and acknowledged in a charter granted in 1967. The Cobblestone Museum is a tourist attraction with its six historic buildings of which three are cobblestone. The casual visitor can learn about cobblestone masonry techniques and step back into time throughout the various displays in the museum buildings.

During the last year the guest register indicates that people from the following states have signed it: Florida, Kansas, Michigan, Virginia, Colorado, California, Arizona, South Carolina, Minnesota, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Wisconsin, Texas, New Jersey, Washington, West Virginia, Kentucky, Missouri, Delaware, Illinois, Connecticut, Massachusetts, Georgia, Rhode Island and the District of Columbia. From out of the country we find British Columbia, Nova Scotia, Ontario, France and Australia. It's interesting that California, Pennsylvania and Texas appear quite a few times in the guest book. The greatest percentage of visitors however, are from within New York State outside of Orleans County. Aside from these names, there are a host of scheduled tours each season by prearrangement. Such tours during the last year have included church and Senior Citizen groups by the busload from both the Rochester and Buffalo areas who also frequently visit the Court House Square and cemetery with the County Historian as guide.

Other groups from such organizations have been the Kenan Art Center, Cornell Club, a group from the General Assembly of the Unitarian-Universalist Association, Rochester Museum of Arts and Sciences, Special Friends of Orleans County, Pittsford Homemakers, Home Bureau from Basom, Landmark Society of Western New York, Elma Senior Citizens, Eden Historical Society, Barker Historical Society, Medina Historical Society, Western New York Association of Historical Agencies, Society of Architectural Historians plus many others too numerous to mention.

Another facet of the Cobblestone Museum includes the Educational Program which is under the charge of C.W. Lattin and Janice Thaine with much help from several dedicated volunteers. Because the New York State curriculum mandates the study of local history at the Fourth Grade level, the Cobblestone Museum is inundated with fourth graders almost daily during each week beginning in late April through through the middle of June. Schools who came to the museum during the school year ending in June 1987, were: Drake School of North Tonawanda, Waterport Elementary, Holley Central,

Medina Oak Orchard and Towne Schools, Lyndonville Central, Akron Central, Kenmore, Brockport Barkley School, Lewiston-Porter, North Star Christian Academy in Rochester, St. Mary's School of Holley, St. Christopher's of Tonawanda, schools from West Ironduoit and the Brookside School in Greece. The accompanying letter is from the last school and is somewhat typical of the mail which often follows up such a tour. During the 1986 season 1,079 students, mostly fourth graders, toured the Cobblestone Museum in groups ranging in size from seventeen to ninety.

Visitors, whether they be students or adults, represent only one kind of group that the museum touches. The second group of people are less obvious as they are the ones seeking information through the Cobblestone Resource Center which is under the direction of Della Robinson. During the past year requests for information on cobblestone masonry have been answered for the state Education Department in Albany as well as the state Architect, Architects in New York, Connecticut, Arizona, and Oklahoma, Genesee Valley Miniature Association, Gallery Associates of New York State, Colonial Dames of the XVII Century, Preservation groups in Michigan, Canada, Illinois, National Register, University of Akron, Ohio, Central New York Chapter of the Society of Architectural Historians, New York Preservation League, American Association of State and Local Historians, Cornell University, Monroe Community College, SUNY Brockport, Buffalo, Genesee, Rochester Public Library, Landmark Society, University of Michigan, University of Rochester plus the following newspapers: Christian Science Monitor, N.Y. Times, Buffalo and Rochester papers, American Magazine and New York Alive.

Beyond this there is also outreach which includes speaking engagements to cultural and civic groups usually done by Della Robinson, but also by the Museum Director. During the past year Mrs. Robinson has spoken to groups in Monroe, Niagara, Orleans and Livingston Counties. On April 25, 1987 the Cobblestone Society was awarded a certificate for innovative programming during Architectural Heritage Year 1986 by the Preservation League of New York State.

The Cobblestone Society each season undertakes to present various cultural programs including the Country Arts Fair and Flea Market, Old Timers Fair, Patriotic Program, Lecture Series, Dinner Programs, Lamplight Program, Recitals, and other activities as inspiration calls. During 1986 over 5,400 people came to the Cobblestone Museum either on tours, special events or weddings in the historic cobblestone church. This is a fairly significant total and one which represents mostly people from outside the immediate area, i.e. tourism!

It is however, often discouraging to see the lack of support and interest there is locally for institutions involved in significant cultural advancement for the benefit of a community such as ours.

When local people don't bother to participate, take advantage of, or understand the richness of their own community, is it any wonder that our local governmental officials quibble about supporting arts, and historical agencies in their endeavors?