

Meetings of the Mendon Foundation are held the 3<sup>rd</sup> Wednesday of every month, 7:30 P.M., 20 Assembly Drive #108

## **Mendon's Cobblestone Landmarks**

*By Diane Ham, Town Historian*

When traveling across New York State between Lake Ontario and U.S. Rote 20, it is amazing how many cobblestone buildings dot the landscape. Neat and orderly rows of almost uniform, egg-shaped stones embedded in the mortar catch the eye and inspire one's curiosity.

Like cottages in cape Cod, the adobes of the Southwest and the sod houses of Kansas and Nebraska, no other state possesses a more or better assortment of cobblestone landmarks than does New York.

While stone construction was common in both Europe and early America, the use of cobblestones in masonry construction is comparatively rare. European and English examples of cobblestone streets, houses and outbuildings have been built since the Middle Ages in regions where glaciated and seaside stones were in abundance. Cobbles came into most common use in Western and Central New York during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Although there are cobblestone structures found elsewhere between the Hudson River and Niagara, 90 percent of New York's cobblestone buildings are found within a 75-mile radius of Rochester. Of the more than 700 cobblestone structures in New York State, Wayne County's 180 buildings are the largest concentration.

Following the American Revolution, settlers began to push westward into new lands in Central and Western New York and the region became mainly agricultural. Although the soil was fertile, it was also filled with "cobblestones," either the smooth, medium-sized stones that were water-rounded by the receding of the lake from its earlier Ridge Road shore, or the slightly more rough fieldstones formed by the movement of the glaciers of a much earlier time. In order to expand crop production, farmers cleared their fields of these cobbles.

How cobblestone came to be an important building material in early New York is not fully understood. One theory is that on completion of the stone locks of the Erie and its connecting canals, dozens of stonemasons, many from the British Isles, were out of work by the 1830s. It is believed that they turned to domestic stone construction, gradually developing between 1830 and 1860 more refined ways of laying cobblestones, which were plentiful and readily accessible in the Lake region.

These craftsmen first started building foundation walls and then went on to build cobblestone buildings.

That these masons brought their cobblestone masonry skills from the Old Country is not a widely held belief today, because the sophistication of their folk art increased as they gained more practice, attaining standards of such masonry fifty years ahead of the English.

A cobblestone is defined by its size – it is a stone that can be held in one hand, as opposed to a pebble, which can be held by two fingers, or a boulder, which is held with two hands.

Glacial cobblestones are rough and come in a wide variety of shapes, sizes and colors – gray, white, red brown and yellow. Lake-washed cobbles are rounded and shorter, worn smooth by action of water and sand, and were found in New York largely on the shores of Lake Ontario, or in riverbeds. Lake-washed cobbles are largely composed of red sandstone.

Hauling lake-washed cobblestones from the lakeshore to the building sites as far away as Route 20 was labor intensive. Farmers delivering grain to lake ports filled their wagons with cobblestones for the return trip. Cobblestone "bees" were held, according to tradition, when neighbors gathered to collect stones from creek beds and gravel pits. They would pass these stones through holes in boards to get uniform sizes, then haul them to the new house site.

Those who have studied cobblestone building construction have concluded that the first cobblestone structures were roughly built of larger stones of mixed sizes picked up from fields or stream beds.

As the mason's skills improved and their clients became



*Jeremiah Stewart House, c.1835, located in Mendon Ponds Park*

## *The Mendon Foundation Newsletter*

**The Mendon Foundation** is a completely volunteer organization which exists with the generous support of its members, volunteers and contributors. Our newsletter is published three times each year. You may contact us with ideas and suggestions for our newsletter, requests for advertising and suggestions, or membership information. Our mailing address is:

**The Mendon Foundation, P.O. Box 231  
Mendon, N.Y. 14506-0231**

### **Board of Directors:**

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### ★MENDON FOUNDATION MISSION STATEMENT★

*The Mendon Foundation is a non-profit corporation established to:*

**PRESERVE**, protect and enhance the scenic, natural, recreational and structural resources in the town of Mendon and directly adjacent properties.

**MAINTAIN** a responsible stewardship of assets and properties held or controlled by the corporation.

**ESTABLISH** and promote local environmental education on issues pertinent to the preservation of natural resources in the town of Mendon.

As we succeed in these objectives, we enhance property values for all Mendon property owners. The Foundation is supported by membership fees, grants and other contributions. Donations to the Mendon Foundation are tax deductible. Proceeds are used to cover easement acquisitions, monitoring and communications. All labor is volunteer.

### **The Mendon Foundation Membership Form**

- I would like to become a member
- I would like to volunteer on / my interests are in:
  - Lehigh Valley Trail Committee
  - Trail Park Committee
  - Mendon Community Park Playground Committee
  - Mendon Hamlet Committee
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more prosperous and discriminating, the stones chosen were smaller and of a more uniform size and color.

Without exception, the later 1850 and 1860 buildings contain lake-washed stones set in carefully jointed mortar in V or beaded pointings. The more refined cobblestone walls are distinguished by projecting stones with mortar markedly recessed, while earlier examples have stones and mortar more nearly flush.

A good mason could lay three courses of small stones across the length of a wall in a day, for which he would receive \$1.00 to \$1.50. The walls were built up slowly to allow the slow drying lime mortar to compress and bear the weight. The better masons would make sure that the facing cobblestones were of a uniform size and color, and as a result, it could take as many as three years to build one cobblestone house.

Durability of the cobblestone building was entirely dependent on the quality of the mortar and the skill of the mason. In the 1800s the masons had to use a soft lime mortar, since portland cement was not available.

The quality of the lime and sand was critical. The coarser and purer the sand, the stronger the cement; the stronger the cement, the firmer the wall. The masons used five to eight bushels of sand to one bushel of lime.

Cobblestone masonry is not actually a style of architecture, according to Robert Trusch in the book *Cobblestone Landmarks of New York State*. Rather, "it is a folk art, a local type of masonry construction that was done over a short 25-year span in the 19<sup>th</sup> century."

Due to the nature of the stones and the individuality of the builders, each cobblestone structure is unique. The method of laying stone in rows, the mixture of the mortar placed between the layers, the embellishment of the mortar, the size and color of the stone quoins (corner cut-stones) contributed to the one-of-a-kind nature of the structures.

The overall feeling of a cobblestone building is one of solid, organic beauty. It is hard to drive past one of these structures on a crowded street or quiet country road without taking notice. With historic preservation protection, these historic cobblestone buildings will be around for centuries.

### **Mendon's Cobblestone Landmarks**

Our cobblestone landmarks are identified by the name of the original owner or person for whom they were built. The majority of Mendon's cobblestone landmarks were placed on the New York State and National Register of Historic Places. Some are on the Town of Mendon Register of Historic Places.

- **Benjamin Adsit Inn & Toll Station**, 1 Dixon Woods, c. 1830
- **Jeremiah Stewart House**, Douglas Rd., circa 1835
- **Mason Cole House**, 933 Mile Sq. Rd., circa 1835
- **Milton Sheldon House**, 21 Mendon Ionia Rd., circa 1833
- **Mendon Academy**, 16 Mendon Ionia Rd., circa 1835
- **Charles Foote House**, 1312 Pittsford Mendon Rd., circa 1830
- **Sibleyville School**, 7027 Rush-Lima Rd., circa 1840
- **Roswell Whitcomb House**, 437 pond Rd., circa 1840s
- **Luther Gates House**, 4389 Clover St., circa 1833
- **Frederick Hubbell House**, 863 Quaker Meeting House Rd., circa 1830s.

## **Mendon Foundation Forms Cooperative Alliance With Pheasants Forever**

The Mendon Foundation and the Genesee Valley Chapter of Pheasants Forever have formed a cooperative agreement to provide habitat reclamation along the Lehigh Valley Trail and in the Town of Mendon for the declining Ring-Necked Pheasant population and many other upland ground bird species.

Pheasants Forever is a 501-C3 nonprofit conservation organization dedicated to the protection and enhancement of the pheasant and other wildlife populations in North America through habitat improvement, public awareness/education, and land management programs that are mutually beneficial to farmers, landowners and wildlife.

Pheasants Forever will work with the Foundation to provide assistance in conservation easement, land management, land acquisition, seed purchases and equipment for habitat restoration.

The Mendon Foundation hopes to work with local land owners to obtain conservation easements that would be beneficial for the ground birds. The easement, which allows the landowner to continue to own the land, places permanent restrictions on future uses of the property in order to protect its agricultural character and/or habitat productivity.

The easement also allows the landowner to use the property as he/she chooses, such as hunting or fishing, so long as the uses are consistent with the values that the easement is intended to preserve.

Easements reduce property owners taxes and provide financial compensation for the environmental easement.

Currently, Pheasants Forever and the Mendon Foundation are working on habitat planting on the Mendon Foundation's Parrish Road project. Supervision of the land management project will be provided by the teamwork of the resident biologist from Pheasants Forever and the Department of Environmental Conservation. They will mutually determine which type of habitat planting best suits the condition of the land and what programs are available to the landowner. Pheasants Forever will provide seed and planting equipment to reach the habitat restoration objective, while the Department of Environmental Conservation will monitor the project's affects upon indigenous wildlife.

Pheasants Forever will hold its annual banquet Thursday, September 21, 2000 at the Genesee Country Village Museum. All funds raised via the banquet will be allocated for land management projects in the Town of Mendon. For further information please call Giorgio Bracaglia, President of the Pheasants Forever Genesee Valley Chapter at: 624-1785.

## **Playground and Little League Park Cleanups Planned by Mendon Foundation**

Saturday, Sept. 23<sup>rd</sup> has been scheduled for a volunteer work party at the Mendon Community Park Playground

Located on the grounds of St. Catherine's Church in Mendon, the playground is maintained by the Mendon Foundation. Volunteers are needed to help with timber replacement, refurbishing and to help with weeding under some of the playground equipment. Bring shovels, rakes and hammers. Cleanup starts at 9 A.M. For additional information call Rayno Niemi at 383-4342.

The fall cleanup of the Lehigh Valley Trail Park, adjacent to the Little League Field, is slated for Oct. 14<sup>th</sup> starting at 2 P.M. The field is located behind St. Catherine's church in Mendon. The entrance to the area is on Rt. 251. Some of the activities will include weeding, mulching and shrub planting. For additional information call Pat Brown at 385-3265 or Brian Eder at 624-2568.

## **Thank-You!**

The Mendon Foundation wishes to thank Pat Brown, Barry Brown, Stacy Brown, Suzy Farrell, Kevin Farrell, Kara Ferrell, Luanne Mansfield, Kristen Mansfield, Dick Dehm, Joan Foss and Carl Foss, for their beautification efforts at the Little League Field's parking area. It looks great.

Also – a sincere thank-you goes out to Brian Eder who mowed a substantial portion of the Lehigh Valley Trail this summer between Route 251 and West Bloomfield Rd.

# *The* **SENTINEL**

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Spring clean-up crew at the Little League Field

## The Fall Garden in Mendon

While you might be tempted to plant mums in your fall garden, think again. Deer love mums.

You may want to consider adding more coneflowers instead. Deer hate coneflowers, and they happen to be in bloom at this time of year. Another suggestion – try planting butterfly bushes (*Buddleia Davidii*), which come in purple or white flowering varieties, or Butterfly weed (*Asclepias*), which has beautiful orange flowers. Both plants bloom all summer until frost. Monkshood (*Aconitum*) is a tall perennial (3-4 feet) with dark purple monk's hood-looking flowers which blooms in the fall, and deer find those distasteful as well. Below is a list of flowers/plants that deer will not eat.

Fall is also the time to think of spring and your vegetable garden soil. If you didn't get to add enough compost this past spring, or had a hard time finding composted manures, you can till in fresh manure and it will be composted by the time you plant your spring peas. Leaves are also a perfect soil amendment, and those can be tilled into the soil or, better yet, shredded and tilled into the vegetable garden.

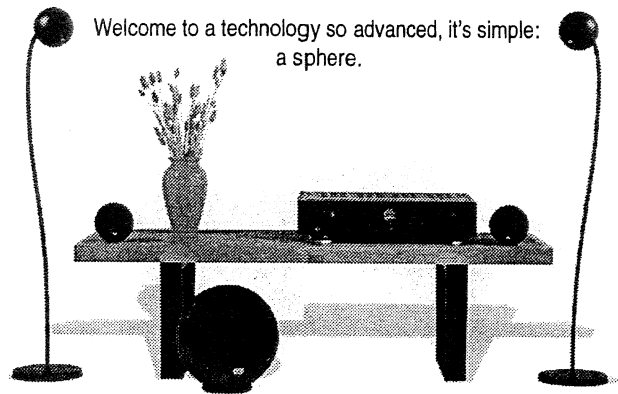
Now, don't forget that fall is one of the best times of the year to get shrubs and trees in the ground, even though we traditionally do most of our plant shopping in the early spring. Cooler weather and coming rains help them establish good root systems that will support the surge of vigorous growth once spring arrives. It is also a good time to divide and transplant perennials and ground covers.

### Deer Resistant Plants

Achillea-Yarrow	Aconitum-Monkshood
Agastache-Anise Hyssop	Alchemilla-Lady's Mantle
Allium-Ornamental Chives	Amsonia - Blue Star
Antirrhinum-Snapdragon	Arabis-Rock Cress
Arctostaphylos - Bearberry	Artemisia-Wormwood
Asclepias-Butterfly Weed	Astilbe-Astilbe
Aubrieta-Purple Rock Cress	Berberis Thunbergii-Barberry
Buddleia Davidii-Butterfly Bush	Buxus-Boxwood
Calamintha-Calamint	Caryopteris-Bluebeard

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Daffodil	Daphne-Daphne
Dicentra-Bleeding Hearts	Digitalis-Foxglove
Echinacea-Coneflower	Echinops-Globe Thistle
Euphorbia-Spurge	Ferns
Filipendula-Dropwort	Galium-Sweet Woodruff
Gaultheria-Wintergreen	Geranium-Hardy, Scented Geranium
Cranesbill	Grasses-Ornamental Grass
Gypsophila-Baby's Breath	Helichrysum - Licorice Plant
Helleborus-Hellebore	Iris-Reblooming tall-bearded-German
Lamium-Dead Nettle	Lavandula-Lavender
Linaria - Toadflax	Lychnis-Campion
Mentha-Mint	Monarda-Bee Balm
Myrica-Northern Bayberry	Nepeta-Catnip
Nipponanthemum-Montauk Daisy	Origanum-Oregano
Pachysandra-Spurge	Perovskia-Russian Sage
Phlox Subulata-Moss Pinks	Picea-Spruce
Potentilla-Cinquefoil	Pulmonaria - Lungwort
Rheum-Ornamental Rhubarb	Rhus-Sumac
Ruta-Herb of Grace	Salvia Officinalis-Garden Sage
Salvia-Meadow Sage	Saponaria-Soapwort
Satureya-Winter Savory	Senecio - Golden Ragwort
Siberian Iris-Iris Siberica	Solidago-Goldenrod
Spiraea Japonica-Spiraea	Stachys-Lamb's Ear
Symphytum-Comfrey	Tanacetum-Tansy
Teucrium-Germander	Thymus-Thyme
Tradescantia-Spiderwort	Unusual Iris
Verbascum-Mullein	Yucca-Adam's Needle

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## Property Owners Working With Fish & Wildlife Service, USDA To Improve Wetlands

With help from the Mendon Foundation, the U.S. Dept. of Agriculture and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, another Mendon property owner has decided to join the Wetlands Reserve Program.

Owners Tim Pryor and Ellen Hickory Smith own an old celery and onion farm on Pittsford Mendon Center Rd. The old fields are now full of cattails, and not a very productive wetland, according to Caren Crook of the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. Crook explained to the property owners that in addition to the cattails, which help absorb pollutants, open water is needed for waterfowl and other animals. Open water is what the property is lacking since the old fields are drained via old drainage ditches.

The Pryor/Smith property has been inspected by the federal government and soil samples are scheduled to be taken in late September. The property will be "ranked" and a wetlands restoration plan will be created.

Pryor and Smith plan on establishing a permanent conservation easement on approximately 12 acres of their property. Because they are choosing to have a permanent easement placed on their property, which means it will forever remain undeveloped, the government will pay 100% of the wetlands restoration costs, and also pay them up to 75% of the



appraised agricultural value of the land. Pryor and Smith will still own the property and retain control.

"We hope that this will be learning experience for the community. We want to involve our son's school in this project so that they may see how the wetlands will be reconstructed, and we would like to open up our property to Mendon Foundation members who would like to go birdwatching," Smith said. "We are also pleased that some of our neighbors have expressed interest in getting involved with the wetlands restoration project."

Although the Pryor/Smith family does not know if the project will get funded, Crook said that they will be "ranked" high because the property is located across from Mendon Ponds Park. The USDA and Fish and Wildlife Service are looking for projects in areas that are in "wildlife corridors" and along migratory routes.

If you would like more information on the Wetlands Reserve Program call JoBeth Bellanca at 716-473-2120 or Caren Crook at 607-753-9334.

### Help Mendon's Water Quality and Save Money

Many Mendon residents use well water, and all of Mendon's residents have septic tanks.

Because many still rely on ground water for drinking, and the population is increasing, you can help preserve Mendon's water quality by using non-toxic products for cleaning your home.

Any of the ingredients listed below can be safely mixed together. Store mixtures in spray bottles, and remember to clearly label them for future use.

Here are the basics and their general uses:

- White Vinegar: Mix with water, and you have a great window and glass cleaner. A cup of white vinegar mixed with 2 gallons of water removes dull or greasy film buildup on



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Do you enjoy watching the wildlife in your open, wooded or wetland areas?

Would you feel comfort in knowing that there is a plan and an organization to support preservation of the rural Mendon charm that attracted so many of its current residents?

Could you use a tax deduction that a conservation easement would bring?

#### Let Us Hear From You

By completing the form at the bottom of the second page of this newsletter, you will tell us of your support for the Mendon Foundation or that you have an interest in more information about us. Volunteer your time, talent or expertise. Join the Mendon Foundation today. Your membership fee is tax deductible.

floors. Vinegar can be used on porcelain, countertops, and tile. Add vinegar to the final rinse in your washing machine to eliminate residues. (Never mix vinegar and bleach!) To get rid of fish or other spoiled food odor, place a bowl of white vinegar on the counter for a few hours. The odor will disappear for good.

- Washing Soda: Removes germs. Mix with water and use as an all-purpose cleaner. Add it to your laundry as well.
- Baking Soda: This can also be used as an all-purpose cleaner. Just mix with water. Use especially for scouring sinks and tubs. Sprinkle over carpet as a deodorizer. To open clogged sinks use ½ cup of baking soda followed by ½ cup of white vinegar
- Salt: Use for deodorizing drains and garbage disposals. Salt can also be used as an abrasive in cleaning pots and pans.

- Lemon Juice: Use as a bleach in laundry and on kitchen surfaces. It adds a fresh clean smell to cleaners. Use 1/4 cup of lemon juice in the dishwasher to remove any pungent odors.

- Cornstarch: Sprinkle on carpet as a deodorizer. Mix with water and use a spray bottle for laundry starch.

- Olive or linseed oil: Mix with vinegar for use as a furniture polish.

- Smelly Cooking Hands: Many of you may have seen the expensive stainless steel bars which are sold to rid your hands of pungent smells you pick up while cooking. An equally effective substitute is to rub your hands over a stainless steel utensil under running water.

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