

Cobblestone Buildings of North America

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Cobblestone Buildings in Canada

With the exception of one or two, all cobblestone buildings known to exist in Canada are located in the vicinity of Paris, Ontario. They were mostly the work of master stone mason Levi Boughton who came to Paris in 1838 from Stephentown, Rensselaer County, in eastern New York State. These structures span a period of time between 1839 and the early 1860s.

Houses, churches, garden walls, basements and a smoke house reflect the touch of Levi Boughton's trowel and that of stone masons who were trained by him. Those who lived or worshipped in these structures felt a sense of pride and respect. This sense has become tradition among those who continue to be caretakers of the cobblestones.

The vast majority of people who live in cobblestone houses is they are just the current caretakers. They feel it is a privilege to live in such a dwelling. There is a feeling that one never truly owns the house but watches over it and strives to maintain it in its original condition as much as possible for the next generation who will take up residence therein.

There is a respect for the original builders and owners who ventured to use the local ancient cobbles in building these structures. This particular style of cobblestone veneer is unique in Ontario thanks to Levi Boughton. He was born in May 26, 1805. He was one of nine children of Ira and Anna Dean Boughton. He eventually became a mason. He married Lydia Mann on September 2, 1827. They first settled in Brantford in 1835. They eventually had 16 children. At the time this area was booming and there was plenty of work for a skilled mason. They later moved to Paris.

[Note: He has frequently been confused with a distant relative of the same name who lived in Victor, Ontario County, New York, also reputed to have built cobblestone buildings in that area. He was born Aug. 13, 1811 and lived there all his life, where he died on Aug. 13, 1886].

Cobblestone Buildings in Paris, Ontario

By Kay Tew Marshall

Whatever claim Paris may have to architectural merit in Ontario, today, exists in twelve houses and two churches built of masonry broadly termed "cobblestone." The art of cobblestone masonry was brought to Paris by an American, Levi Boughton, who came here from Normandale, Albany County, New York State, in 1838, with his wife, Sida Mann.

Mr. Boughton's craft was very far from new, having been introduced into Britain nearly 2,000 years ago, by the great Roman builders. Cobblestone construction survived in England and one or more masons are believed to have brought it from there to New York State, where several hundred cobblestone houses are still extant.

Intricate in design and expensive to build because of the time involved, the masonry consists of horizontal rows of small, round,

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smooth, glacial-deposit stones set in mortar with a line of mortar in between the rows and often points of mortar between each stone. This facing is tied into a solid rubble wall by every fourth or fifth stone which is longer.

These cobblestone walls are extremely pleasing in their textural quality and happily coincided in popularity with the best building period of the last century when the Greek revival house with its Farge windows, fine cornices and well proportioned roofs was in vogue.

In the eastern United States, mainly around Rochester, New York, cobblestone houses were built over a period of about 60 years beginning in the early eighteen hundreds, However, Boughton's arrival here was toward the end of cobblestone's popularity so the building period in Paris and district lasted a scant 20 years.

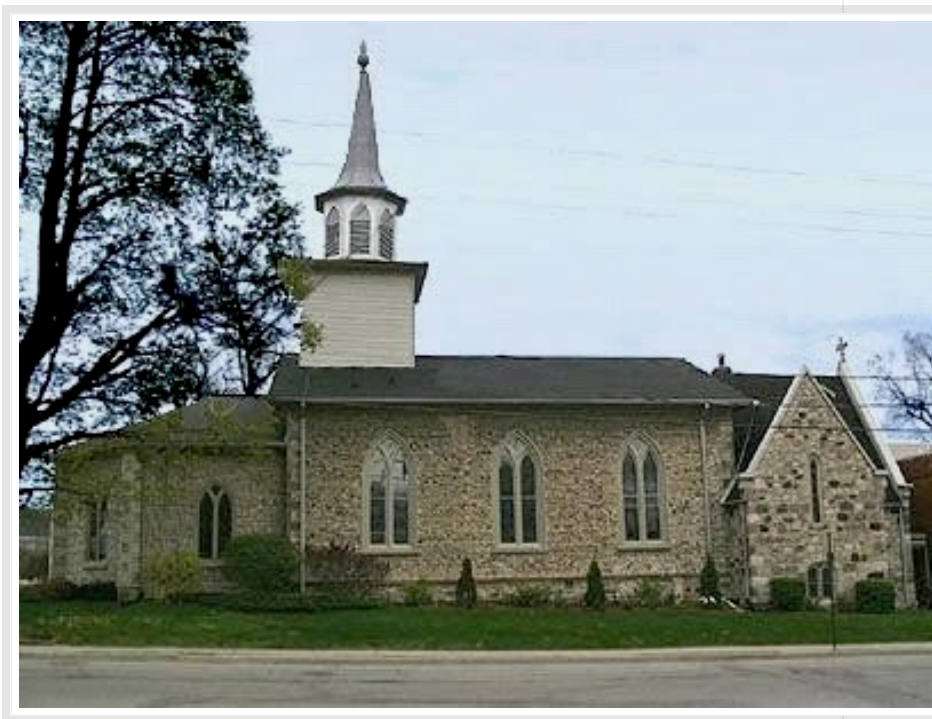
The houses were too expensive to build as it took many months to size the stones and lay the courses (rows) on the walls, so they were soon supplanted by the square-cut, stone houses built by a group of Scottish masons of this district.

In and around Rochester, cobblestone houses are regarded with pride and provide one of the attractions for tourists. They have been a subject of study by architects and artists and several are State owned and preserved. In Ontario, where Paris has the largest single known group of these houses, they are relatively unrecognized for their beauty and rarity.

Fortunately, the better ones locally, notably Hamilton Place, on Grand River North, the Montieth House, on Broadway, and Levi Boughton's own original home on the corner of Queen and Ball Streets, have fallen into good hands and are in an excellent state of preservation.

Of particular interest is St. James' Anglican Church, which was the first cobblestone building in Paris, and the Paris Plains Church, north of the town, built by a group of pioneers from stones gathered from the fields of their own farms.

Of Levi Boughton, himself, little is known except that he lived out his life in Paris, becoming a man of property. He had sixteen children, yet curiously, not one of his descendants now lives in Paris. Boughton is forgotten; but his houses still stand firm, a memorial to his fine craftsmanship and a reminder of the early cultural development of the town.



St. James Anglican Church, 8 Burwell St.

This is located in an area known as the Upper Village , the oldest section of town. It is a fine example of Gothic Revival architecture. It was Levi Boughton's first commission shortly after he arrived in Paris. Hiram Capron, the funder of Paris, and his wife Mary donated land for the construction of the church. Funds came from St. James Anglican

Church in Edinburgh, Scotland, with the understanding that the church be made of stone. It was built in 1839. Congregational and local donations also helped the cause. Boughton also served as a deacon and trustee of the church.

Boughton also built the nave, which he designed in Classical Revival style combining the Gothic style in the windows and door. From the east bank on Willow Street cobbles were gathered but not sorted as to size or color. Only two to five rows per day could be laid because the mortar was slow to dry.

Random stones were embedded into the thick mortar with every fifth or sixth stone tied into the thick rubblestone walls. Between the spaces the stones were then filled with mortar to form a sort of raised inverted V. The inch wide horizontal mortar joints were wavy. The main walls are 18 inches thick and 17 feet high from the water table, which is cut stone protruding two inches over the basement to throw the water off the basement walls. The parish hall was a later addition. The new front section was constructed in 1989.



Levi Boughton House, 19 Queen Street

Levi Boughton built this house for himself and his family in 1852 and resided here for 30 years. There is an attached cobblestone kitchen wing. In the 1851 census his son, Levi Jr., age 18, was listed as a mason. It is thus likely he assisted his father in the building of the house and the laying of the carefully chosen cobblestones.

The front porch and wing were later additions. The house is an excellent example of pre-1850 cottage architecture with its balanced dimensions, low pitched roof, alternating quoins and wide doorway with side and overhead lights. The interior has changed little save for the addition of a furnace and hardwood flooring, which cover the original wide plank floors. Of particular interest is the plaster medallion in the hall ceiling. Boughton died in 1895 and was buried in the Paris Cemetery. A bronze plaque placed at the grave site lists his major contributions to the architecture of Paris.

Subsequent owners were John Carnie Jr., David J. Wilkes, Janet Weir, John O. Dickert, Ingvar Jensen and Thomas Jensen.



Hamilton Court, 165 Grand River Street North

Entrepreneur William Hamilton arrived in Paris in 1831 where he established plaster and grist mills, owned large tracts of land and a distillery from where he recycled the mash to the contented pigs which, in turn went happily to his pork packing factory. By 1839, Hamilton decided to engage American architect Andrew Minny to design a stately Greek Revival house high on the bank of the Grand River overlooking the valley.

Boughton was in charge of the build. Canopies were set up on the property under which piles of cobbles were dumped for careful sorting. By 1844 the house was ready for the Hamilton family. On the lintel over the front door is carved the date 1844, the date when Hillside was finished.

A short time after the house was built Hamilton added a wing on the northeast side of the house which blended with the original structure. Informal living rooms filled this space.

Elizabeth, the Hamilton's only child, married Paul Wickson, an artist whose studio was the belvedere. Elizabeth inherited Hillside and, in 1900, changed the name to Hamilton Place. In 1950, the home left the Hamilton lineage. A low cobblestone wall extended across the width of the property along the street.



Garden wall, 52 Grand River Street

This decorative cobblestone garden wall extends along the street in front of the house at 52 Grand River Street. It was built by Asah Wolverton. The wall is 10 courses high and 14 inches thick and is protected by wooden planking. It consists of water-rounded stones. A cobblestone smoke house was built by Mr. Wolverton at the rear of the

residence.



O'Neil Farm, 899 Keg Lane

Shortly after Charles O'Neil married Margaret Urquhart, they moved into this regency style cobblestone house that he had built. All of the walls were finished in cobbles and, as an interesting feature, elongated cobbles were placed above the windows.



Deans Farm, 963 Keg Lane

Matthew and Mary Deans immigrated here from Paisley, Scotland, in 1835-6 where they established their farm. Their first home was a log cabin. In 1862, this one and a half story Regency style cottage was built with cobblestone on the front and sides with square cut stone on the back wall.

More than 14,000 cobbles are said to have been gathered and sorted to complete the walls. The first five rows of cobbles are of like size and color and laid on an oblique angle. The other courses became larger at the top with the cobbles varying in color. The square cut stone kitchen wing was added later. The front dormer was added in 1920. The farm has remained in the Deans family to this day.



Kilton Cottage, 33 Oak Avenue

Shortly after the marriage of David Patton and Matilda Killips in 1851, they built this one-and-a-half story Gothic Revival style cobblestone house. It was named by combining their last names. Its steeply pitched roof edged with elaborately carved bargeboard, cobblestone rows supported between the carved corner posts and gothic windows make this house unique among the cobblestones found here. The Pattons lived here for nearly 50 years. David Patton and his brother, James, operated a hardware store until it was destroyed in the Paris Fire of 1900. He owned the Paris-Brantford Plank and Gravel Toll Road that followed today's Paris Road.



Sowden House, 7 Burwell Street

According to the 1855 census, Dr. Samuel Sowden, his wife Elizabeth and their three children were living here. The amazing feature of this building is it has no quoins and the corners are rounded. The door entered Sowden's dispensary in the center of the curve. This feature is unusual both here and in the New York State cobblestone districts. Under the eaves, the brackets end in round pendants accenting the shape of the cobblestones.

On February 11, 1852, The Paris Star listed Sowden as dispensing drugs, medicines, books and stationery. Thomas Hall, a customs inspector, was the next owner. His son, John M. Hall, owned the Irish Linen Shop which is still a major attraction in Paris. They lived in the house until the 1960's.



Mitchell House, 16 Broadway West

This Greek Revival house built by Charles Mitchell has also been referred to as the Monteith House. Mitchell came here from Chittenango, New York where, as a young man, he had worked in the carriage and wagon trade. Later he moved to Leroy, New York where he continued in his craft with his partner, Thomas Ladd. He moved to Hamilton in 1832 and finally to Paris in 1836.

Here he established a carriage and wagon shop and built grain separators called fanning mills. He chose Levi Boughton to build his showplace Greek Revival house with fluted Doric columns and other decorative work. It is built of lake washed stones. A small wing projecting from the right side was built in 1885 as a doctor's office.

At the corners instead of quoins the builder used 18" x 12" cut stone piers with moulded capitals and bases which support a heavy three-member Greek Revival entablature. Window openings have cut stone sills and lintels.



Old postcard view of Mitchell House



Bosworth House, 22 Church Street

Between 1842 and 1845, this house, nestled between Dundas and Church Streets, was built by the Reverend Newton Bosworth. The two cobblestone walls face the street and the Eastlake porch at the front of the house was added in 1870 and restored in 2012. Another interesting feature is the truncated gable roof where the end of each of the gables is flattened out. Bosworth sold the house to the Regular Baptist Church for use as a manse.



Side view

In 1870, the Reverend Thomas Henderson and his wife resided here. He was Baptist minister and the school inspector for the Paris Schools. That year Reverend Henderson, who was friends with the Bells in Scotland, arranged for the Bell family, including their son, Alexander Graham Bell, to come and stay with him after they had emigrated from Scotland. Reverend Henderson was instrumental in the Bells purchasing what is now the Bell Homestead.



Barker House, 24 Barker Street



Prior to restoration



Barker House as it originally appeared.

County of Brant Public Library



Rear, prior to restoration

James Bilton Barker came from Lincolnshire, England, in the 1820s and was one of the first settlers of Paris. He married Elizabeth Frances Gadd and they had nine children; James set up a blacksmith shop and built a log cabin behind the Mitchell House. Samuel Barker, the eldest son of James and Elizabeth, was the second child born in Paris. In 1840 they bought 75 acres of land at the end of what is now Barker Street from Thomas Gadd, Elizabeth's father. Barker Street was originally their laneway.



James Bilton Parker

In 1841 Barker began building his house. Cobblestones were collected from along the Grand River. He may have done some of the work himself. The single story Regency-design has cobblestone veneer on all four exterior walls which was more costly and unusual. Because the house was built on the side of a steep hill, a complete lower level allowed them to have a walk out basement housing the kitchen pantry and dining room. The bedrooms were on the main floor. Later James

and Elizabeth Luck resided here. Over the years the property changed owners many times and fell into disrepair and became derelict. It has been re-developed as a premier property worth upwards of \$3 million.



Ouse Lodge, 2 Arnold Street

The Rev. William Morse, a missionary who served in India and Jamaica, became the first resident minister of St. James Anglican Church in 1839. In 1841 Morse purchased land from Hiram Capron, the founder of Paris, at what is today 3 Arnold St. and requested Boughton to build him a comfortable cobblestone house. He named it Ouse Lodge for a river in England which also was a previous name for the Grand River. Originally this was Morse's own home and not the manse to the church.

Morse was an accomplished musician and had a pipe organ in the dining room. He also had a price children's school at his home. He sold the house to William G. Curtis in 1876. With the exception of the foundation the house was stuccoed over in 1965.



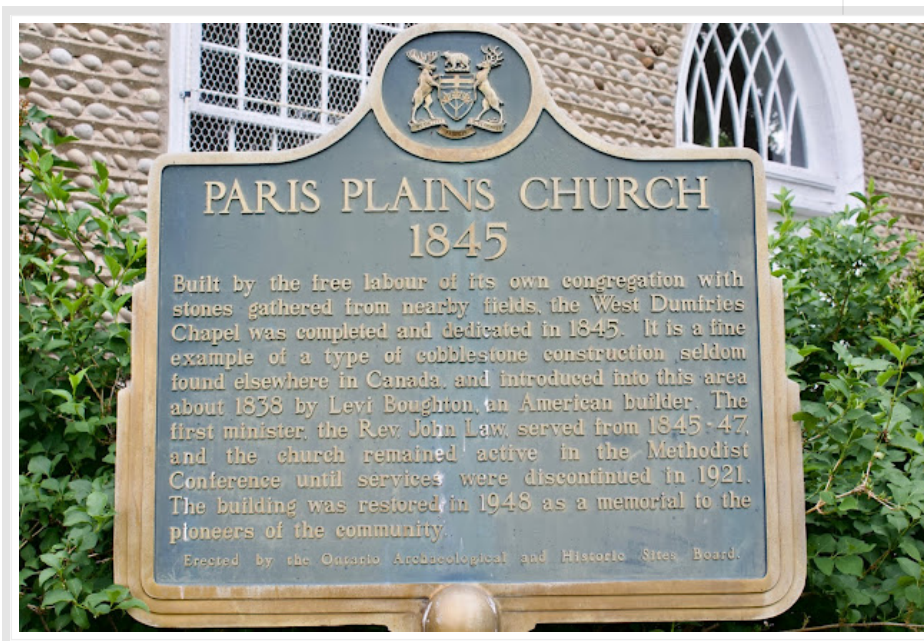
207 West River Road, South Dunfries Township

George C. Brown was born December 19, 1825 in Rome, New York, son of Lucian and Almira Brown. He was a hatter by trade, but later took up farming. He moved to Canada in 1848 and engaged in the stove business but subsequently settled on this 218-acre farm in South Dumfries Township, where he continued farming until 1881 when he and his family moved to the Town of Paris. This dates to the 1840s or 1850s. The herringbone masonry work reflects the excellent skill of the masons.



598-760 Paris Plains Church Road, Brant

Paris Plains Church was built by volunteer labor in 1845. The building materials cost about £1,000 sterling. It was nearly abandoned in the 1940s, but was restored by a committee of dedicated citizens. It is a small rectangular structure with a center entrance flanked by a window on each side. Window openings and the entrance have pointed arches in the Gothic Revival style. Walls are built of water-rounded cobblestones. The long oval shapes are laid diagonally, Cobblestones are gray, yellow and brownish.



Historical marker in front of church.



Date stone above the entrance

Two Cobblestone Houses Now Gone





Totten House at 11 Broadway West

This Greek Revival house was built by Daniel Totten between 1846 and 1851 and was demolished in 1962 to make way for the city's municipal parking lot. It resembled the nearby Mitchell house. Prior to demolition it was the home of Mrs. Ellen Hollingsworth. The exterior consisted of water-rounded stones of various shades of gray, yellow and brown, laid three courses per quoin height.

Daniel Totten arrived in Paris about 1831 with very little money but being ambitious, he established a small woolen mill behind 66 Grand

River Street where he manufactured tweeds, blankets and high quality flannels . He invested wisely in real estate and became wealthy. Following Totten's death it became a boarding house and was poorly maintained.

On the facade of this Regency cottage were long French windows and it's possible that the front entrance had a transom and sidelights around the door.

The upper story was too small to be a full sized second floor and too large for a belvedere.

The Bethel House

James Nimmo arrived in Paris in 1833 and by 1836, he had purchased from the Crown, a large acreage on the 2nd Concession, Brantford Township. It was on Lot 15 in the 1850s that a cobblestone Regency cottage was built on a ridge overlooking the Grand River. The French door on the vestibule which was built out from the house, the French windows and the cobblestone gave the house a welcoming feeling. Because the basement was fully finished in brick, it accommodated six rooms, one containing a fireplace with irons and strong hooks in the ceiling. The property changed hands several times until 1975 when a gravel company purchased it and the cobblestone house was demolished.

Cobblestone House in Sparta



6738 Quaker Road

This large cobblestone house was built by Isaac Chase, formerly of Farmington, New York in 1871-72 for his nephew, Anasa. It is of the Gothic Cottage design popular in the middle Victorian era. The walls are two feet thick with facing water washed stones, the size and shape of hen's eggs. This area was first settled in the 1820s by Quakers from Pennsylvania.

Holmesville

A small cobblestone house is said to exist (or once did) near Holmesville in Huron County, Ontario, built by a Mr. Cook. The walls were built of lake-washed stones gathered from the beach of Lake Huron.

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