

/- WELCHER HOUSE

The Welcher house on the Minsteed Road was built in 1844-1845 by the Welcher family who have lived in it through the years. The carpenters were a Mr. Parking and Ruel Taylor. The mason was Mr. Skinner. The house is in excellent condition.

STONES: The medium size, very rounded red lake stones measure $2\frac{1}{2}$ x $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

JOINTS: The horizontal V is $\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, the vertical joints are pyramids, and the course is $2\frac{1}{4}$ - $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches.

MORTAR: The mortar is hard and fine in texture.

QUOINS and LINTELS: Regulation with tooling.

SIDES: Larger lake stones but still very regular.

BACK: Here is found rough, large field stone of all colors.

Morgan was busy for a number of years clearing his land while his young wife assisted by lighting the fires and keeping them going to burn the timber. In the summers, he worked for his neighbor, Stephen Durfee, for fifty cents a day, or for a bushel of wheat. Later, unable to make payments on the land or pay taxes, he returned to Connecticut. While there, he borrowed \$500 from his mother and, on returning, built the cobblestone house with eight rooms. His trip to Connecticut, on foot, took six weeks and during this time his wife was alone except for a faithful dog, a cow, and the only horse in the area. The nearest neighbors were miles away.

Cobblestone architecture was primarily a rural movement, and the successful farmers and country squires who had these structures built were men of courage and character.

Building such houses was not an undertaking suited to the fainthearted. This is amply demonstrated in an account from the memoirs of Henry Lee, grandfather of Mrs. Lois Welcher, who owns the beautiful cobblestone house on the Minstead Road in Arcadia. I quote a part of his account of the building operations: "Father had accumulated a large quantity of stone and lumber including one very large whitewood tree, about four feet in diameter, and thousands of feet of basswood and hemlock and had carefully piled it

up with sticks between each board and built a shed over it that it might be thoroughly seasoned. On the last sleighing that spring there was a "bee" and a large pile of sand was taken from back of the woods where Mr. Farnsworth's farm now stands, it being the first ever taken from there. It kept one or two men shoveling snow on the bare spots by thawing so fast. We got two or three loads of cobblestones from the lake for the facing of the wall. The "cut stones" (caps and sills) came from Phelps (then Vienna). The front door capstone and sill each made nearly a load.

"The job was let to a Mr. Skinner, not including the inside work, have forgotten the price, but I think it was less than \$200. They came and laid the cellar wall; then went away and did other jobs to let this harden; then returned and laid the first story; then went away again for several weeks and so on until it was finished. Meanwhile, the carpenters prepared the window and door frames, the sleepers and joists. As the walls were ready for them they did the plaining (sic) and matching the flooring (every board in the house being plained by hand) and nearly all but the floors were sandpapered. While they were absent father would have to draw more stones from Phelps besides doing a little farming and all the other work and business accompanying such building. He also

went with two teams to Italy Hallow, south of Geneva, and got about 2000 feet of pine lumber for about \$10 per thousand, being about all of the pine used in the house. The first stone he drew from the lake, he took a man with the team and went to the bar off the bluff across the bay on ice. I went with him and we reached home about one o'clock in the morning. Father went about 20 times but sometimes being rainy he got only part of a load and often reached home 10 or 12 o'clock at night. Parkings the carpenter only did the work until it was inclosed, which was late in the fall. One of my jobs was to flatten the nail heads as there were no finishing nails then; also had to putty the nailheads after being driven. In laying the walls after getting out of reach from the ground there were poles set about 6 or 8 feet from the wall and about as high as the walls were to be, then long poles were lashed to them with hickory withes an inch or an inch and a quarter in diameter and six to eight inches long and then scantling laid across them to the wall and planks laid on them making a scaffolding all around the house. Then a crane and tackles and rope were fastened to the northeast post (it being larger than the rest). Buckets a little larger than a molasses cask cut in two would be ~~would be~~ filled with either mortar or stones and hoisted up, using a horse, to the scaffold and their contents distributed with a wheelbarrow. When they were above reach from a scaffold

the staging would be raised again. The inside work was done by Ruel Taylor and his men. They did their work evenings and were here all winter.

"The doors were made by hand. Father went out southwest of Newark and bought a butternut tree for stair railings and all connected with them -- the house was not ready for occupancy until May the next year. The frame part was not moved until fall, the crane and tackles were used in digging the well in the fall, which was in 1845."

According to Mr. Lee, his and his father's hands got so sore picking up stones that they had to bandage them. Sometimes the stones were so heavy that they had to dump some from their load. Also, since the horses wearied easily under the heavy load, they frequently had to stop and unharness the animals to rest them before completing the trip.

The story of the Stuart House on the corner of West and West Maple Avenues in Newark was told in a letter by Franklin J. Keller, grandson of Jacob Keller, the builder, to C.W. Stuart, quoted here from Mrs. Herbert Jackson's article in the NEWARK COURIER-GAZETTE of May 14, 1953:

"Jacob Keller came to Newark from Columbia County when a young man and bought the farm that lies around and west of the stone house. He first lived in a log cabin

