

Mrs. Sarah (Frank) Bonesteele

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By Melody Burri, staff writer

The original Bonesteele homestead — now the home of Starbucks Cafe on Route 96 near Eastview — has a unique story.

In March of 1842, P. P. Bonesteele of Victor wrote these words:

“In 1835, I built me a house of cobblestone, of the following description: front 45 by 83 feet, 2 stories, forming an ‘L’ in rear of 65 by 23 feet, single story for kitchen, washroom, and wood shed. ...Furnished all materials on the ground, and paid my masons \$3.75 per hundred feet. ...I think I have as good a house as can be made of the same materials. There is not a crack in the walls that you can stick a pin in as yet. The stone I do not consider any expense as it frees the land of them.”

Mr. Bonesteele, a farmer, was glad to free his land of the cobblestones or field cobbles. They are small, rounded stones deposited in this area by the glaciers thousands of years ago.

When Victor was first settled, these stones made farming difficult. When farmers removed them from the soil they became a natural building material. A “stoning bee” would often be held when a farm planned to build a cobblestone home. Neighboring friends and family would come together and haul and sort cobblestones by size.

Included with the original (Bonesteele) homestead were 118 acres on which Eastview Mall now stands and 14 acres which was taken in 1968 for Route 490.

With the death of P. Philip Bonesteele in 1877, the house was bequeathed to his son, Peter. By 1878, the house had its eaves extended and a wooden second floor was added to the rear wing, as well as the Italianate front porch.

Hoping to increase his estate (which included the land where Eastview Mall now stands), Peter Bonesteele made a serious agreement with a wealthy, neighboring landowner. The agreement was that Peter’s son, Frank, and E. Reece Reed’s daughter, Irma, would marry after college. Unfortunately Peter Bonesteele died in 1881 when his son Frank was only nine years old and the agreement was not carried to fruition. And for Sarah Hall that was a good thing!

Possibly because of the beautiful architecture and the unique cobblestone building in which he had been raised, Frank Bonesteele entered the Massachusetts Institute of Technology to study architecture in 1894. There he met his adventurous wife, Sarah.

Sarah Hall had spent much of her early years traveling the high seas of the Atlantic Ocean with her father, merchant vessel sea captain. She boldly entered MIT to study math as one of the first females to be accepted into the institution. Miss Hall had at one time also been a tutor for Helen Keller.

Frank Bonesteele and Sarah Hall were married on September 4, 1898, and returned to the family home in Victor. It was a disappointment to Frank's mother, Octavious Morgan Bonesteele, who tried to keep the previous agreement with the Reed family in force.

Seeming to follow in his father's footsteps, Frank Bonesteele died at an early age in 1919. Sarah Hall Bonesteele lived in the house alone, having had no children, until 1946. She then sold her landmark home.

In the 1960s the home was used as a commune, and had fallen into a state of disrepair after being vacant for about seventeen years.

In 1971, Eastview Mall was built on the original Bonesteele potato fields. In 1983, a non-profit organization, "Victor Association of Cultural and Performing Arts: was established under the directorship of Lorene Flora-Benson. The Association leased the building to house classes in dance, theater, piano, violin, painting, sculpture and mime. The Cobblestone Arts Center, as it was eventually called, ceased operation in the Bonesteele Homestead in 1993.

After more than a decade of being vacant, the building is now Starbucks Café.

Cobblestone buildings are no longer being built in Victor. Preserving the remaining cobblestones are important to Victor's heritage. What stories those cobblestone walls of the Bonesteele homestead could tell! Can you imagine the discussion when Frank told his mother that he was not going to marry Irma Reed? If only those stones could talk!

Information for this article gathered from: "A History of Victor, NY," Fagan, Guiffre, Snyder, 1976; "The Cobblestone Style — An Artistic Blend of Methods and Heritage," James M. Wilson, 1986; The Fish Horn Alarm, J. Sheldon Fisher, 1994; Various newspaper clippings c. 2011

<http://www.victorpost.com/x1146473012/Historic-cobblestone-homestead-in-Victor-now-home-to-Starbucks>