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A Celebration of Bricks in Brighton, June 25-27:

GIDEON COBB DAYS



Cobb's Hill as seen looking east from Klinck knoll on the Pinnacle Range, 1895. Vintage photographs and captions by the late University of Rochester professor Herman LeRoy Fairchild.

Historic Brighton will present a three-day celebration of the brick industry in early Brighton and its impact on the architecture of the region.

Friday, June 25, noon: Luncheon at Mario's Via Abruzzi, 2740 Monroe Ave., for area historians. Theme: "The Geology We Share." Speaker, Professor William Chaisson will talk on "**Quarried Sand and Clay: The Geologic Factor in an Industry.**" \$15. Reservations necessary. Seating limited.

Saturday, June 26, noon: Board members and friends will walk Monroe Avenue from Cobbs Hill to Twelve Corners placing temporary markers at historic sites related to the brick industry. 1:30 PM: At Rose Park in the Roselawn neighborhood.

Neighborhood, Brighton Historian Mary Jo Lanphear and Professor Darrell Norris will discuss Roselawn history and architecture and distribute walking tour maps. Free.

Sunday, June 27, 12:30 to 3:30 PM: 45-minute tours on the 40 & 8 trolley featuring 10 historic brick structures. Leave from Brighton Middle School bus loop on the half hour. \$4. Reservations necessary. Seating limited. See enclosed form

For information call 784-5238. www.historicbrighton.com

THE GEOLOGY WE SHARE



Gideon Cobb's sand bank in the west nose of Cobb's Hill, 1894. The excavation left a wide level area. The hill lost its entire southerly shoulder and huge boulders were dislodged and rolled to the lower ground.



Kames in Mendon Ponds Park, 1895



The Council Rock, 1899, is a "glacial boulder erratic" (sic) according to Fairchild..



Above: The Pinnacle as seen from Cobb's Hill reservoir, 1922. [The Rochester Orphan Asylum {now Hillside Children's Center} was built ca. 1900.]

Left: Irondequoit Valley "Sugar-Loaf" on the south side of Atlantic Avenue, 1915. Vintage photographs and captions by the late UR professor Heman LeRoy Fairchild.

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"The Geology We Share" will be the theme of the Friday June 25 luncheon at Mario's Via Abruzzi, 2740 Monroe Ave. The featured speaker will be **Dr. William Chaisson**, University of Rochester adjunct professor in the Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences. His talk is entitled: "Quarried Sand and Clay: the Geologic Factor in an Industry."

Bill Chaisson came to the study of geology through a circuitous path that began with a childhood fascination with natural history. A varied educational background ended in a Ph.D. program in geology at the University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

Dr. Chaisson ended up in Rochester because his future wife, Deirdre Cunningham, was the landscape curator at George Eastman House. In 1998 he obtained an adjunct professor position in Department of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the University of Rochester.

Recent projects have examined the record of 19th and 20th century climate changes in the sediments of Hemlock and Conesus Lakes, the effect of geologic and geographic factors on the economic evolution of Beacon, NY and the record of land use preserved in the historical photographs of the Rochester area taken by UR geologist Herman LeRoy Fairchild.

In 2003, Chaisson stopped teaching and moved to Trumansburg, NY to become an innkeeper, but he retains his academic position at the UR and continues to pursue natural historical studies. The exhibit "Frozen in Time: Herman Leroy Fairchild's photographic Record of Rochester's Geological Past" was curated by Chaisson and exhibited in the Rare Books and Special Collections Library at the University of Rochester from October 2003 to February 2004.

WHO WAS GIDEON COBB?



Kettle lakelet by South Goodman St., 1894. present site of Highland Parkway with the Pinnacle range in the background. All vintage photographs by the late Herman LeRoy Fairchild.

Gideon Cobb (1791-1864), arrived in Col. Nathaniel Rochester's Hundred Acre Tract (population 15 people) in 1812. Cobb and his brother enlisted in the army during the War of 1812 when volunteers were recruited to take Fort Erie. Assigned to the Aurora area and made an officer, Gideon erected defenses to protect a settlement from Indian attack. He returned to this area to operate a cattle and hog yard. With his older brother, William, and Francis Brown, Cobb moved an axe and scythe factory from the Rome area to a site in what became Rochesterville in 1817.

With wagon and four oxen, Cobb initiated the first area passenger and freight service, primarily to the mouth of the Genesee via Merchants Road. He cut through the dense forest and removed stumps to build a road between the village center and Frankfort that would become today's State Street.

Cobb bought 100 acres in Penfield that became known as Allens Creek Farm. With his oxen team, Gideon opened the State Road between the Genesee River and Pittsford that was named Monroe Ave. during the administration of President James Monroe (1817-1825). While cutting through the wilderness and removing stumps, Cobb discovered an extensive bed of brick clay "a foot or more in depth beneath the loamy soil" as well as "a bed of fine white sand suitable for the making of bricks." In 1818, Gideon sold the Penfield property, and he and William purchased 140 acres in Brighton that

included the sand and clay veins. They called their partnership The Sand Company. In 1820, William bought another contiguous 140 acres that passed to Gideon in 1826. (Until 1823, land east of the Genesee was in Brighton.)

In 1819, Gideon married Roxanna Worden and built a temporary log house along Monroe Ave. He soon began construction of a stage coach tavern and elegant brick mansion at the nearby Seven Corners. Eventually, the Cobbs had nine children.

BRIGHTON BRICKS AND SAND: A VALUABLE BUILDING RESOURCE

When the Erie Canal created the nation's first boomtown, buildings went up in rapid succession. The closest brickyards—in Holcomb and Clarkson—opened about 1816. Gideon soon realized that the future of the area depended upon brick production. By 1820, he was creating the area's first brick factory on the Monroe Avenue site, thus providing the building materials for many 19th century residences and commercial structures, some of which still stand. Other Brighton residents soon followed suit: Leonard Buckland, Jonathan Town, Amos Buckland, John Weis, Edwin Wilson, William Otis and Alvin Burton all opened brickyards along Monroe Ave. Today, there are about 20 so-called "Bricks of Brighton"—town structures made from town bricks. Unfortunately, Gideon Cobb's own

THE GIDEON COBB HOUSE DIES AND GOES TO BRICK HEAVEN ABOUT 1965



Newspaper article from the 1960s noting the gradual demise of the Gideon Cobb house.

22-room mansion is no longer among them.

The bricks were made by hand from the same Brighton clay that today’s residents discover every time they thrust garden spade into ground. (If these same residents live on land formerly occupied by brickyards, they also dig up bricks and brick shards.) Environmentalists soon decried the use of the Pinnacle range for clay, gravel, and sand pits. Seminary professor Walter Rauschenberg wrote: “Sacred to the memory of the Pinnacle hill, Once the playground of happy children, The trysting place of lovers, The joy of all who communed with nature. It was carted away for gravel and sand in the year of our Lord, 1909. Peace to its rubble.”

The next year, 1910, George Eastman purchased one third of the Pinnacle Range—the third that included Cobb’s Hill—and presented it to the City of Rochester as a park.

THE GIDEON COBB HOUSE

“The large, nearly square, brick house that stood on the southeast corner of Monroe and Highland avenues, was erected in the early 1820s,” according to architect Carl Schmidt. In the tradition of the Stone tavern on East Avenue, the Cobb house was a tavern too. Schmidt theorizes that the house was “originally in the Post Colonial style but sometime during the Victorian era, the wide projecting cor-

nice, cupola, and entrance porches were added.”

In his later years, Cobb became interested in the abolitionist and the prohibition campaign of Brightonian William Bloss who dumped the contents of his East Avenue tavern into the Erie Canal. Cobb also closed his tavern and destroyed his stock of liquor.

THE DEMISE OF THE GIDEON COBB HOUSE

In the years before the Brighton Historic Preservation Commission was formed, many historic landmarks such as the Cobb house were lost. The newspaper account from the 1960s notes:

“The Cobb house was the only house of consequence on the road between Pittsford and Brighton. Gideon Cobb painstakingly constructed his mansion of bricks he made from local [Brighton] clay. Then he and his bride, Roxanna Worden, moved into the 22-room grandeur. At that time, Monroe Ave. was only a narrow country road. It ascended a steep hill at the point where Highland Ave. now crosses. Opposite was the little red schoolhouse that Cobb gave to the city.

“The Cobb mansion stood in the center of a 300-acre tract owned by Gideon and including Cobb’s Hill where the reservoir now stands.... Although Gideon’s house today lies silent and cold among the great trees that try to warm it, it was truly a masterpiece in his time.

“There was a fireplace in every one of the 22 rooms. In the rear wing, there were contained a baking kitchen, a meat cooking room and a milk room from the days when the structure still was a tavern....

“Last of the Cobb clan to occupy the premises was Mrs. Harry R. Wickham, a great granddaughter who in 1936 petitioned the City Council for a zoning variation [sic] to erect an apartment house. She was turned down.”

The house was acquired by realtors in foreclosure proceedings in the late 1930s and eventually demolished about 1965.

‘A ROSE IS A ROSE IS A ROSE’
**FROM BRICKYARD
TO ROSELAWN**

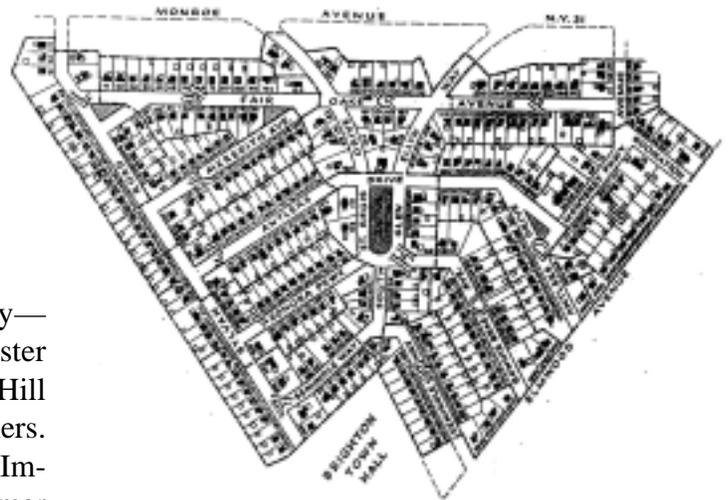
By Betsy Brayer

Brighton’s premier 19th century industry—brickmaking—ended in 1919 when the Rochester Brick and Tile Manufacturing Co. near Cobbs Hill folded its tent and moved permanently to Fishers. That same year the Monroe Avenue Land and Improvement Co. purchased 135 acres of the former brickyards for one of the first post World War I “automobile suburbs” to be built anywhere. (Indeed Liberty Bonds were “accepted as cash” for the “10% down” on lots priced at “\$500 up.”) The many small brick houses originally built for brickmaking employees along both sides of Monroe Ave. were razed and grading began in 1920.

Legend has it that the new tract was named Rose Lawn (becoming Roselawn in the late 1940s) because the boundaries of the subdivision map resembled a rose. At a later date, however, the tip of the rose northeast of Monroe Ave. (including N. Saint Regis Dr., Tarrytown Rd., and N. Glen Ellyn Way) was removed and became part of the Bel-Aire subdivision. Today Roselawn resembles a triangle (with the Brighton Town Hall removed to the south) and is bounded by Elmwood Ave., Sylvan Rd. to the west, Monroe and Hollywood Avenues to the north and east.

To further solidify the rose connection, the developers set aside small triangular patches of land (which they called “rosebuds”) throughout the subdivision, designating them as parks. The largest and central area bounded by S. St Regis Dr., S. Glen Ellyn, and Antlers Dr. became Rose Park in 1927.

Rose Lawn property was further touted for its “wide winding boulevards with 200 ft. openings off Monroe Ave.” It had “large sightly home, park, school and church sites...far from factory and railroad smoke.” It could be “reached in 15 minutes by street car, ten minutes by auto from downtown” yet was beyond the reach of “city taxes.” The “pure air” playground, skating rink, and tennis courts at Cobbs Hill were adjacent. For golfers, the “2½



Street plan of Roselawn after the “tip of the rose” was removed and became part of the Bel-Aire subdivision across Monroe Ave.

mile circle” of Roselawn was “midway between the Country Club of Rochester and Oak Hill” (the latter then located on the site of the present River Campus of the University of Rochester).

“The Baking, Mercantile and Theatrical Interests of Rochester move steadily Eastward and nearer Rose Lawn” the developers noted in 1924. Accompanying this assertion that Rose Lawn was “in the path of the city’s eastward growth,” was a panoramic photograph of the new Eastman Theatre and School of Music (completed in 1922), the RG&E building on East Ave. then under construction, and the site of the Franklin Street branch of the Rochester Savings Bank (1926). The city was indeed expanding toward Brighton.

More jarring to sensibilities of today are the restrictive covenants—imposed in 1920 for the next 15 years. These included stipulations that “no house could be erected that cost less than \$4500,” “no spirituous or malt liquor could be made, kept, or sold on any lot,” (Roselawn came in with Prohibition) and the onerous promise that “most Careful and Conservative Building and Race Restrictions Protect Your Investment.” The last was spelled out to mean that “property could not be leased, rented or occupied by any person of an undesirable race or character whose residence might provide a detriment to the property.”

Such covenants were unfortunately not unusual in the suburban developments of the 1920s and represent the downside of the flight to the suburbs.

ROSELAWN EXAMPLES OF EARLY AND MID-20TH CENTURY ARCHITECTURE

Photos by Robyn Schaefer

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In 1919, 135 acres of former brickyards became Roselawn—one of the first post World War I “automobile suburbs.” The small brick houses of brickmaking employees along both sides of Monroe Ave. were replaced by these “modern” styles.



This stucco Mediterranean Revival house—a simple and elegant flat-roofed design with front portico—is on Sylvan Rd.



The Building, Materials and Theoretical Inquiries of Roselawn more steadily expanded and named Rose Lawn

“REASONS WHY I BOUGHT A LOT IN ROSE LAWN”

Being a Testimonial Obtained From People Who Have Already Purchased Lots

1. "It is so convenient to the city."
2. "I like the environment."
3. "The children can play in their lawn's system in the safe neighboring playground on Coburn Hill."
4. "I bought an acre because I can see that values will increase."
5. "We are fond of the country which is so soon reached from Rose Lawn."
6. "Matters of health were our first consideration and Rose Lawn is probably the best part of Rochester and the vicinity."
7. "I cannot spare the time for an hour's ride to business every morning and evening."
8. "I investigated other subdivisions and Rose Lawn had more advantages which appealed to me."
9. "The fact that the surrounding heavy areas are permanent and will not be built on in a few years, influenced my choice."
10. "I like Rose Lawn because it is so suitably situated—a few minutes to work or country."



“Reasons why I bought a lot in Rose Lawn” is the subject of this 1924 promotional. Note that this early map does resemble a rose.



Sylvan Rd.: American Foursquare style with dormers in hipped roof, exquisite wood porch, leaded glass windows and projecting bay on north side.

ROSELAWN EXAMPLES OF EARLY AND MID-20TH CENTURY ARCHITECTURE

Photos by Robyn Schaefer



Unusual Neo-Tudor with stucco façade, shingle sides and rear, and steeply pitched roof on Bonnie Brae Ave



Mediterranean Revival Style on Fair Oaks Ave. White stucco with red terracotta tile roof. Arched transom windows, balcony over the center entrance portico which has Doric columns, and arched entry flanked by two small round-headed windows.



Sylvan Rd.: Dutch Colonial Revival with gambrel roof, front bay window, portico with sunburst detail and interesting eave detail.



Glen Ellyn Way.: Colonial Revival style with round, flat-roofed porch with Doric columns.



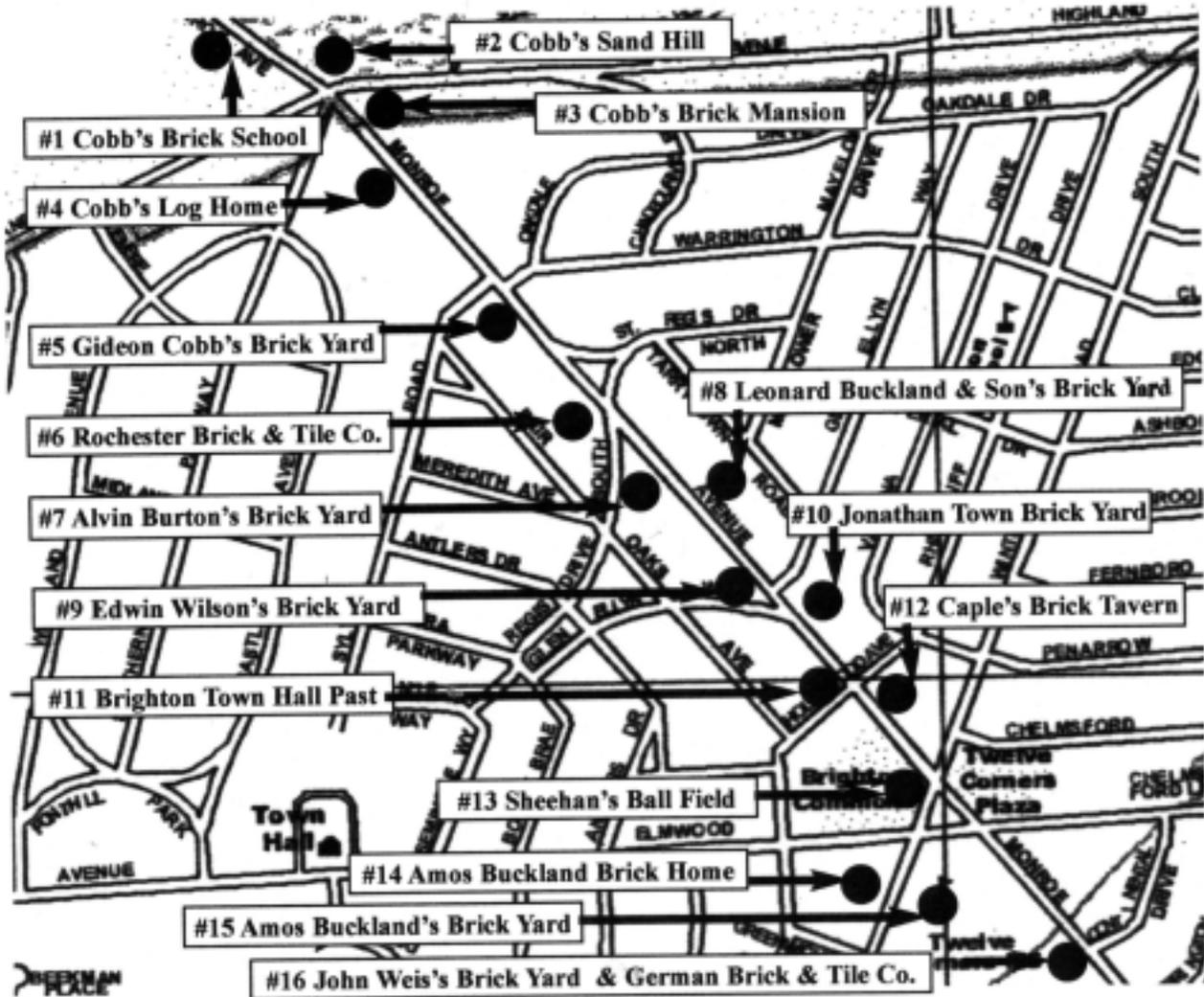
This South St. Regis Drive house is stucco Tudor Revival with porte cochere, steeply pitched roof, and side dormers.



A typical brick and flagstone ranch house on Sylvan Rd. Captions by Arlene Wright.

Monroe Ave. Historic Places

Gideon Cobb Days, Saturday Walk, June 26, 2004



- #1 #1275 Monroe Ave. (Hillside Manor Appartmrnts)
- #2 North Corner Highland Ave. & Monroe Ave.
- #3 #1485 Highland Ave. (Private Home)
- #4 #1399 Monroe Ave. (Lucas Insurance Company)
- #5 #1485 Monroe Ave. (Nothnagle Homes)
- #6 #1577 Monroe Ave. (A. J. Pucci Insurance)
- #7 #1627 Monroe Ave. (M. & T. Bank)
- #8 #1664 Monroe Ave. (RSVO Papers & Gifts)

- #9 #1711 Monroe Ave. (Monroe Hardware)
- #10 #1740 Monroe Ave. (Staub Cleaners)
- #11 #1795 Monroe Ave. (Malek's Bakery)
- #12 #1832 Monroe Ave. (Twelve Corners Apothecary)
- #13 #1855 Monroe Ave. (Brighton Commons)
- #14 #1037 South Winton Ave. (Winton Chabad Center)
- #15 #2070 South Winton Ave. (Twelve Corners Middle School)
- #16 #2075 Monroe Ave. (Canandaigua National Bank)

Map and research for Gideon Cobb
article by Leo Dodd