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History of Pemaquid Maine - Ancient Pavings

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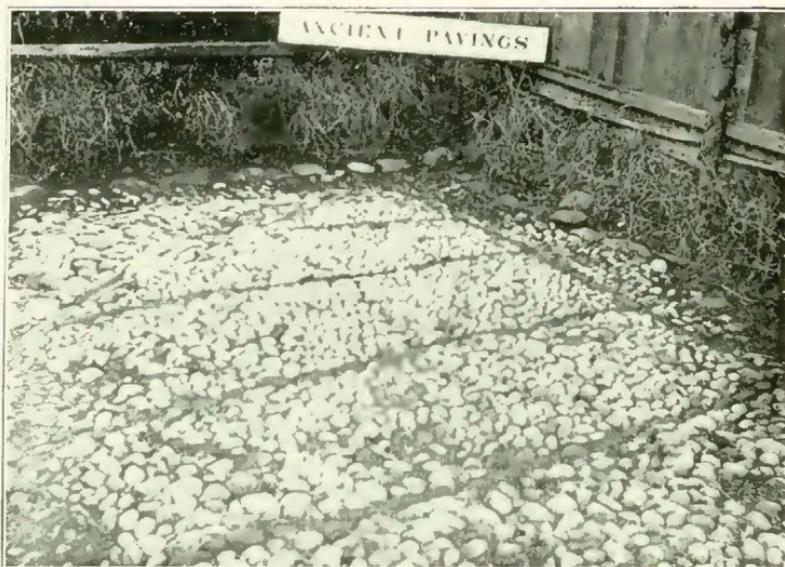
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Ancient Pavings of Pemaquid

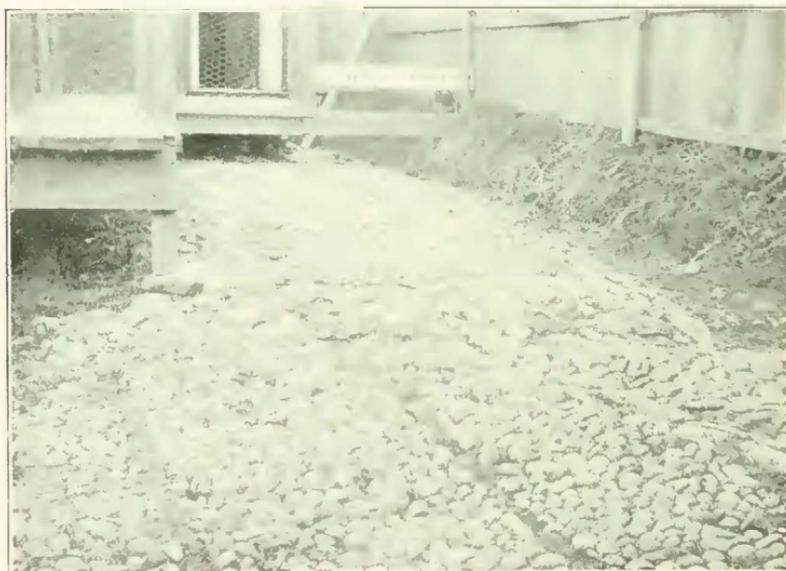
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SIDEWALK OF ANCIENT PAVINGS.



ANCIENT PAVINGS.

Ancient Pavings of Pemaquid.

Mystery of — Extent of — Fine workmanship — Protection of the pavings — Why so little can be exhibited — Cobble and flat-stone paving — Depth beneath the soil — How has it become buried — Evidence of Mr. James Partridge and his brother — First discovery by ploughing — Evidence of Capt. L. D. McLain, J. B. Fitch and others — Digging up one of the paved streets — First indicated by stunted vegetation during drought — Report of Maine Historical Society of August 25th and 26th, 1869.

Green is the sod where, centuries ago,
The pavements echoed with the thronging feet
Of busy crowds that hurried to and fro,
And met and parted in the city street;
Here, where they lived, all holy thoughts revive,
Of patient striving and of faith held fast;
Here, where they died, their buried records live;
Silent they speak from out the shadowy past.

M. W. HACKELTON.

THE greatest mystery of all the relics found at old Pemaquid within the last century are her wonderful and extensive pavings, beyond the reach of any recorded history yet brought to light, as to their origin, and yet showing where the people have left them as originally laid, the best specimens of that kind of work done with natural stone that I have ever seen. The extent and workmanship which I have been able to examine a portion of, in three different localities, two on the east and one on the west side of the river, indicate the settlement of a people well advanced in civilization.

Having heard much about the paved streets before I commenced investigations here I have taken much pains to obtain correct information concerning the history as far back as possible and with the time and means at my disposal to examine all that has been exposed during the last decade.

As soon as my health would permit after coming here, I began excavations and work on a cottage to cover the pavings and preserve the relics found. Mr. Partridge kindly showed me a convenient spot and gave me the free use of it. "But" said he, speaking from his past experience, "it will be no use for you to uncover it unless you can protect it with a building for the relic hunters will carry away every stone you uncover unless you protect them."

I did not have the funds to pay for a very elaborate building; but after some delay put up a structure 12 x 15 feet, and one story, using the paving for the floor and on shelves placed relics and curiosities that were gathered here, forming a sort of a museum and named it the "Paving Cottage." I could only exhibit a small piece some 10 x 12 feet square, as the platform on which people stood to view it with rail in front to keep them from going on to it, covered a part from view.

This was not satisfactory to me or all of my visitors, rather a small exhibit where so much had been claimed and some would naturally say, "Well they might have laid that some time in the night to have it to exhibit." But I knew that there was more of it joining what I had on exhibition, for by having a narrow trench dug at right angles from the fine cobble-stones toward the fort foundations I found paving extending that way thirty-three feet with a good water course and curbstone on the outer edges. This was of flat stones filled in with some cobbles from the shore to make it all compact.

I finally got permission of the heirs of Mr. Partridge, he having died in 1888, to uncover more of the paving and I then had the building moved to the northern edge of it and enclosed it with a fence and having a raised platform over it. This gives visitors a good opportunity to view and examine both kinds of stone work. So we have now on exhibition what appears to be a short section of a street about ten feet above high water mark, leading down a fine easy sloping field toward a small beach, an indent line of the harbor shore, a pretty place to bathe and where the children love to play and build forts of the fine white sand, in summer.

The larger stones form what we term the main street, which is thirty-three feet in width including the gutters, or water courses. The finer work of cobble-stones evidently taken from the beach near by is eleven and one-half feet wide. The longer cobbles were selected and placed across the sidewalk on lines two feet and one-half apart, then the space filled in with smaller ones. One row is laid diagonally as if to form the corner of a square yard, and it might have been thus fancifully done because it was the front yard paving of some former mansion; no prettier place could have been found along the shore, and it was in close proximity to the fort. The other part we found to be laid in sections, when we got it swept off, for no one can see the fine workmanship until the seams are cleared of soil and all swept off, because the uneven stones could not be laid level like flat ones. Unobserving people would pass over that exposed by the plough because the plough can go no lower than the tops of the highest stones, leaving all others entirely covered with soil.

All this work was done systematically for I found by measurements that the larger paving sloped from the center

either way to the gutters which are nicely laid with selected stone for the curbing and finer cobbles for the center all compactly placed, and served to drain both parts of the pavings, which were found to be twelve inches beneath the soil at the center, and fifteen at the edges. That is not a great depth compared with volcanic burials of ancient streets or localities that have the wash of running water; but for this locality it seems deep, being on a nearly level field and in other places on the very highest part of the peninsula.

At first I thought it might have been caused by decayed vegetable matter which had, year by year for centuries, accumulated there but I gave up that theory when I found it was covered with rich soil well mixed with coarse and fine gravel. It is now thought to be the work of angle or earth worms and that theory has some foundation from the fact that every spring and fall they throw up the soil between the cobbles so that we have frequently to sweep it up and take it away to prevent the stones from being completely hidden from view.

This corresponds with experiments made by Prof. Darwin some years ago with a piece of board which he laid flat on the soil in his garden; the worms soon covered it from view with soil which they brought to the surface. Few people can realize the amount of work those little earth worms do unless they study their habits.

Mr. Partridge's Evidence.

As we walked up the field from the shore where the cottage now stands Mr. Partridge said, "I have traced the paving up through this field by ploughing and digging to the road; and from there on to where the gates of the forts were located in front of the old house, then out to the

burying-ground. I have tried several times to plough them out in that field but found them so large that the only way to get rid of them was to dig them up and haul them away. Some years ago a gentleman from Bangor, Maine, came here and stopped several weeks making surveys and a plan of the pavings found here. He was an invalid and I used to have to help him out of bed in the morning." I could not get any information about this person on the results of his work as Mr. Partridge had forgotten his name.

J. Reed Partridge, a brother of the above named James, now residing at Bremen, went over this field with me and pointed out the locality of the main street as he saw it when he helped his brother to plough up the field many years ago.

Capt. Lorenzo D. McLain's Evidence.

He is a boat builder and has resided at the Beach many years. One day, about three years ago he surprised me by bounding in through the doorway of the Paving Cottage and with a pleasant salutation said, as he made a solid landing on the platform with both feet at once, "There! this is the first time I have ever been inside of this building since you put it up."

After examining the relics and pavings he gave me the following information. "When I was a small boy, about 1855 I think it was, I helped your uncle Jim plough this field. He had got a new No. 8 plough and was going to plough his land deeper than he had been doing. He had Capt. Alfred Bradley (still living) and Willard Jones with two yoke of oxen, and my job was to hold down the plough beam and keep it clear.

“ Every time we came 'round on this side of the field the plough would come up some ways in spite of all we could do and it appeared to slide along on something like a ledge, but we could not think a ledge would be so even.

“ At last he got out of patience and turning to me said ‘Jemes rice,’ that was his swear expression; ‘boy, go up to the barn and get a hoe and the crowbar and we will see what there is here.’ Then we found this paving and where we first cleared it off it seemed to be laid in cement and we had to dig a long time with the crowbar before we could get out the first stone.”

When we uncovered the larger stone paving I found it had the appearance of having been disturbed on the part now covered by the platform. I inquired of Capt. McLain about that. “O!” said he, “that is the work of the relic hunters. When uncle Jim first found this he opened quite a piece and left it uncovered. One day I came along here and found that the relic hunters had dug out the smaller stones and taken them away; then uncle Jim had to cover it up to save it.”

By examining the soil where the stone had been taken out I found brick, charcoal and other indications that the paving had been laid over ruins of some former structure as I have before found relics beneath stone-work that showed plainly that the last structure was erected over the ruins of some previous one. This goes to prove the history of the place stating that it has been repeatedly built up and destroyed.

Mrs. Everett Lewis told me of indications of cellars, a fireplace, etc., found alongside this paving many years ago.

David Chamberlain, Esq., of this town, an aged gentleman now residing at Round Pond, Maine, pointed out a

spot near the road and on a line with the paving now uncovered, where he uncovered a portion of the cobbles in 1869, to exhibit to the Members of the Maine Historical Society. Said he, "I uncovered a piece there in the morning thirty feet long and before night every stone was taken away."

Capt. Joseph B. Fitch of Chicago who used to trade here, visited the place a few years ago and kindly went with me over the old paved streets leading out to the burying-ground and pointed out the spots where, when a boy, he used to pick raspberries from bushes that grew up beside the curbstones of the street which were afterward hauled away to the river bank.

Mr. Nathan Goold of Portland informed me that he visited Pemaquid about twenty-five years ago and Capt. Patrick Tukey showed him pavings on that street and also between the cellars. Said he, "I think those people must have been *paving cranks* to have paved their streets and between their houses too."

In the testimony given by Mr. Henry Varley in the account of the celebration given here in 1871, there were three points left unsatisfactory to me, in his statement that, "I was engaged with other men more than one week in digging up the pavement of one street."

That account failed to *locate* the street, give the *number* of men employed or tell what they *did* with the paving stone. One day Capt. Patrick Tukey of Long Cove came here to look over the ruins with me and when standing upon the old Rock and gazing over the field he remarked, "I used to work on this place many years ago for Capt. Nichols."

I inquired "Did you ever see any one digging up any of the paved streets here?" "Oh! yes I remember that

Mr. Varley dug up one that ran from the shore to the burying-ground."

"How many men did he have employed with him?"
"Well, I can't just remember but *three* or *four* I should say."

"What did they do with the stone, Captain?"

"Well they had a cart and oxen and after they dug them up with their pickaxes and crowbars they put them in the cart and hauled them to the shore and dumped them over the bank."

I was pleased to obtain this statement because it gave more definite information and confirmed my idea that it must have been a street with a steep grade where the soil had not gathered over it sufficiently deep to admit of cultivation without reaching it.

I have heard it said that the first indications of paving seen by recent settlers was on a field of grain where during a drought, that above the paving suffered most, and being stunted plainly marked its outline. By that means we are able to plainly trace all the buried walls of the fort, and the cellars can be traced with much more accuracy when the grass is short in spring or soon after being mowed over.

Mr. John Blaisdell who now resides near here on the old Col. Brackett estate, once showed me where Mr. Partridge ploughed over a cross street leading down from the main street toward the river, perhaps two-thirds of the distance from the old barn to the burying-ground. "I was driving the cattle" said he, "and the plough struck the edge of a flat stone and turned it out from among the rest, and uncle Jim made me stop the cattle and he went back and put the stone in its place again."

About three years ago I had an opportunity to examine a portion of the main street pavings which were exposed well out toward the old cemetery when the field was ploughed. It was in quite good condition and paved with quite large cobbles.

Beside the many places where I have examined it, I have been shown another place where it was found on the bank of a small sandy cove, near the present village, and close to the residence of Capt. George R. McLain and Llewellyn McLain. That found up the river will come under an account of a trip to the Pemaquid Falls, three miles up this noted winding river.

I will close this chapter by a quotation from the report of the Maine Historical Society of August 25 and 26, 1869, by the Secretary, Mr. Edward Ballard :

By the diligence of some members of the local committee, a portion of the paved street had been laid bare by the removal of the superincumbent soil, to the depth of eight to eighteen inches, over which the ploughshare had often been driven in former years. The regular arrangement of the beach-stones, the depression for the water course to the shore, the curbstones, the adjoining foundation-stones still in place, articles of household furniture and implements of the artisan, all these and other concurring facts proved, beyond the possibility of a doubt, that a European community had dwelt on this spot, and had made this long street in imitation of what they had left in the mother land.