

**THREE MASONS
WHO MADE THE
BLOCK AND STACK MASONRY**

Caspar Steuber's cousin, Henry Steuber, arrived in Sauk County in 1841, from Waldeck, Germany, with his sons: John, Christian, Phillip and Fred. Cousin Caspar joined them in 1853. Caspar built the schoolhouse on Hwy 12 (site #9) and the houses at sites #1 and #27. The barn at site #26 is on the Steuber farm.



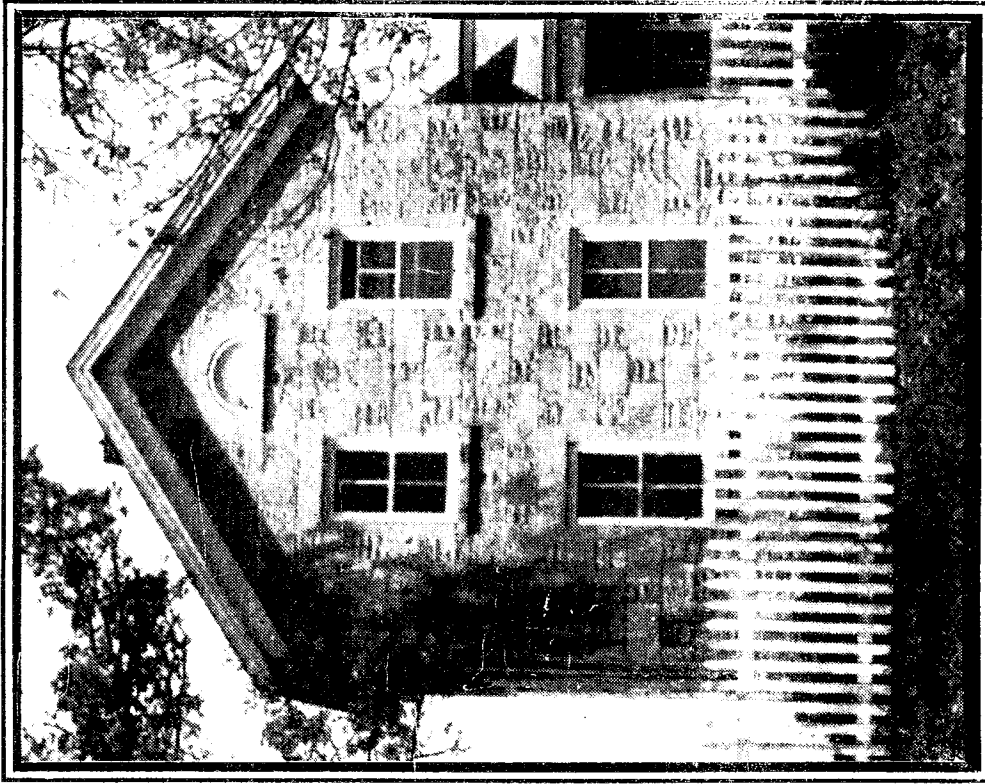
Peter Kindschi was born in 1833 in Davos, Graubuenden, Switzerland. With his two brothers and two sisters he was brought to Sauk County in 1846 by their father, Johann. In 1870 Peter built the house on Luck Road (site #20.) In 1882, Peter's son John Peter married Emma, daughter of Christian Steuber.

John
Peter
Felix

("mason Felix") was born in Haldenstein, Graubuenden in 1833 and came to Honey Creek in 1856. In 1860 he married Catherine, sister of Peter Kindschi. In 1888 the initials "JPF" and the date "1863" were found on a block and stack stone house, now destroyed, 1 1/2 miles south and east of Witwen.

Together these three masons built the 1875 Ragatz Church (site #21.) Each of them built other buildings, some block and stack, others simple rubble construction. No other mason has been identified who made the block and stack pattern.

**GUIDE
TO
THE GERMAN/SWISS
BLOCK-AND-STACK**

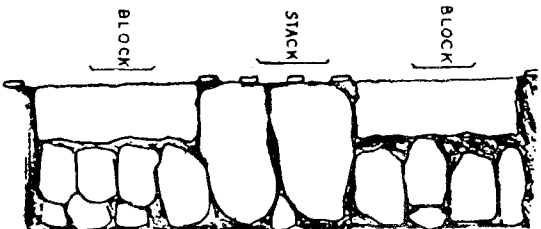


**MASONRY
OF ROXBURY, SAC PRAIRIE & HONEY CREEK
WISCONSIN**

SETTLEMENT HISTORY

When Count Agoston Haraszthy first saw the fertile land in northwest Dane County, he wrote in his journal, "What happy people will this feed shortly!" He was a colorful character who bought the land, and laid out and promoted the town of "Haraszthy", later called Sauk City. Soon German-speaking settlers did arrive in large numbers. In 1845 Father Adelebert Inama came from Austria to serve these "unchurched Germans." Soon after, a number of German religious liberals arrived, fleeing the repression that accompanied the Revolution of 1848. They were mostly educated city people who soon came to dominate the village. Upriver, the town of Prairie du Sac accommodated Yankee settlers coming west from New England. Father Inama persevered and built both St. Aloysius in Sauk City (now housed in a modern structure) and the large stone church, St. Norbert's, at Roxbury (site #5.) Many of the farms and businesses around Roxbury are owned by descendants of the settlers who contributed stone and labor to build St. Norbert's.

The Swiss settlement along Honey Creek in Sauk County was founded in 1842 by Bartholomew Ragatz, from Tamins, Canton Graubunden, Switzerland. The ten Ragatz sons broke the prairie sod for the families that followed them from Graubunden to Honey Creek. Their log house became a Sunday gathering place for the community. The Ragatz Church (site #21) was from its beginning a "mother" church to Evangelical congregations across southern Wisconsin. The stone church at Blackhawk (site #26) and the brick church at Denzer are among the surviving examples. A wooden tabernacle at Witwen (#38) is the present site of an annual revival that has been held in various spots along Honey Creek for 140 years. Twelve square miles of the valley surrounding the Ragatz Church are listed in the National Register of Historic Places as the Honey Creek Swiss Rural Historic District.



SIDE VIEW

TECHNOLOGY AND TECHNIQUE

The stone quarried near Roxbury and on the hills bordering the Sauk Prairie is a type of limestone, called dolomite. It can be sawn or worked with chisels and hammers to produce a variety of surface textures. The stone splits naturally into layers 6" to 10" thick. Cut into rectangular blocks it can be fitted together to form an outer surface called "ashlar." Behind this veneered surface is the load-bearing wall of smaller stones and lime mortar.

Church Rd., cr of Church Rd. and CTH 'PF'. Built in 1875. The front and sides are perhaps the most elegant example of the block and stack pattern. The rear wall is rubble with raised pointing to resemble ashlar. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

22] **Lohr House**, E9430A CTH 'PF'. 1877. The rounded window hoods are a concession to the popularity in the 1870's of the Italianate style.

23] **Steuber Barn**, E9172 CTH 'PF'. On the south side of the road, this is the only barn foundation in the block and stack pattern. The pink color of the pointing comes from red sand used in the mortar.

24] **Wintermantel House**, E9010 CTH 'PF'. The section to the left is dated 1871. The wing, to the right, was added in 1884. The porch enclosure is a later addition.

OTHER POINTS OF HISTORICAL INTEREST

29] **Marxville**, Intersection CTH 'KP' and Hwy 19 in Dane County. Except for modern siding, the village retains its 19th century appearance.

30] **Wollersheim Winery**, Hwy 188 between Hwy 12 and Hwy 60. Open to the public. The ornate house was originally 3 stories. Its masonry is intermediate between block and stack and true ashlar. Note the beautiful stone winery, an exceptionally fine rubble building. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

31] **Tripp Memorial Library**, 565 Water St., Prairie du Sac. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Museum on the second floor is open in the summer, 1-4 on Saturdays.

32] **Hahn House Museum**, 806 Water St., Sauk City. One of the oldest structures in the area. Open in the summer, 2-4 Saturday and Sunday.

33] **Fire Station**, 717 John Adams St., Sauk City. Location of the state's oldest volunteer fire company. Property of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society, open by arrangement.

25] **Ott House**, E8842 CTH 'PF'. Built about 1875, the house had an ornate "gingerbread" porch. The "crazy quilt" stone porch is typical of a brief revival of stone construction in the 1940s.

26] **Blackhawk Church**, S10174 CTH 'C'. The block and stack pattern appears on the oldest section, built in 1866. The fanlight window replaced the original door in 1901.

27] **Engle House**, E8912 CTH 'O'. Built by Caspar Steuber in 1869, the house has had a number of "facelifts." Note the hops house (farm building closest to the road) in the 1860s the "hops boom" made fortunes for some area farmers.

28] **Meyer House**, E9452 CTH 'O'. Built in 1861, the house faces the old road, between the house and the barn. Block and stack pattern is on the sides and front of the house.

34] **Freethinkers' Hall**, 307 Polk St., Sauk City, 1884. In the National Register of Historic Places. Now affiliated with the Unitarian/Universalist Society. Meetings: 10 am, 2nd and 4th Sundays.

35] **Prairie du Sac Dam**. Built in 1913, the dam created Lake Wisconsin. Veterans' Memorial Park, below the dam, is reached from Water St. in Prairie du Sac.

36] **Freethinkers' Cemetery**, S8614 Sloty Rd. The pine grove was planted in 1866. Nearby at S8933 is the log house, now covered in modern siding, built in 1847 by Henry Ochsner, father of the famous Drs. Ochsner.

37] **Our Lady of Loreto Catholic Church**, E8336 CTH 'C' west of Denzer. Built in 1880, this small church served both Irish and German Catholics. Property of the Sauk Prairie Area Historical Society. Listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

38] **Witwen Campground and Tabernacle**, S9855 CTH 'E'. Site of the annual revival meeting of area Evangelical churches and July 4th picnic and parade. On the south side of the grounds is a hand-dug mill race. Tabernacle built in 1918.

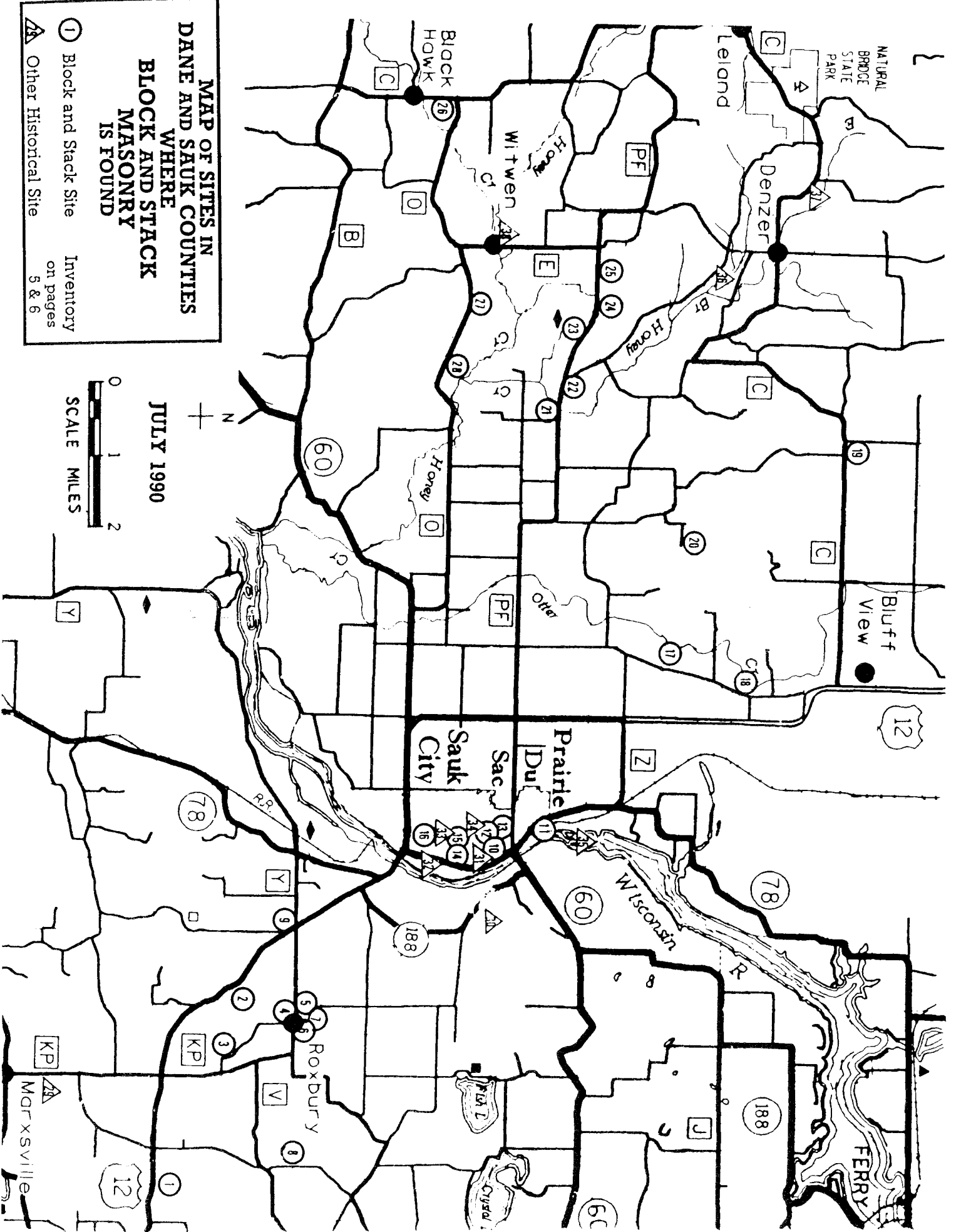
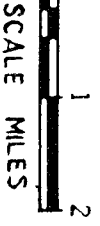
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**MAP OF SITES IN
DANE AND SAUK COUNTIES
WHERE
BLOCK AND STACK
MASONRY
IS FOUND**

- ① Block and Stack Site
- △ Other Historical Site

Inventories
on pages
5 & 6

JULY 1990



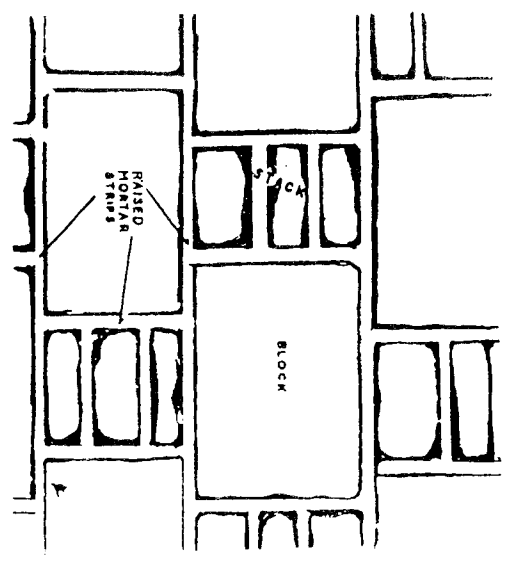
INVENTORY OF BLOCK AND STACK SITES IN SAUK AND DANE COUNTIES

- 1] Ballweg House, 6766 Hwy. 12. Pictured on the cover. Built in 1874 by Caspar Steuber.
- 2] Roelke House, 7060 Hwy. 12. In the Roelke family since 1893. Datestone "CS 1875" (CS for Carl Schaefer)
- 3] Kippley House, 6931 Kippley Rd. The Kippley farm since 1856. The house is dated 1876.
- 4] Roxbury Tavern, (The Gasthaus), Cr. County Hwy. "Y" and Kippley Rd. in Roxbury. Datestone "Reuter 1869." Note the combination of ashlar and block and stack on the facade, rubble side walls.
- 5] St. Norbert's Catholic Church, Roxbury. Casper Steuber and Otto Coenen built the nave in 1860. Note the finished quoins at the corners. Transsept with the block and stack pattern, 1878. Bell tower, in full ashlar, 1893.
- 6] Icehouse, 7230 Inama Road. This small building has some block and stack on the front wall, possibly constructed using finished blocks salvaged from another building.
- 7] Neu House, 7230 Inama Rd. The walk-out basement has a variation of the block and stack pattern.
- 8] Loper House, 7163 Loper Road. 1½ story, Greek Revival style.
- 9] Schoolhouse, 9261 CTH "Y", corner of "Y" and Hwy. 12. Built by Caspar Steuber. Battle of Wisconsin Heights (Blackhawk War) Historical Marker is at the same intersection.
- 10] Mockler Building, 595 Water St., Prairie du Sac. Dated "about 1850," in Walter Doll, *Historical Sketches of Prairie du Sac*.
- 11] Thilke House, 856 Water St., Prairie du Sac. This up-scale version of the pattern was executed in 1870 in dolomite, marble and red sandstone, to achieve a polychrome effect. The Thilke family history is told by Erhart Mueller in his book, *Also in Sumpter*.
- 12] Cummings House, 545 Fifth St., Prairie du Sac. Described by August Derleth in *Walden West*. Built for Yankee physician Albion P. Cummings.
- 13] Kelsey House, 507 Third St. cr of Washington St., Prairie du Sac. In Italianate style. Block and stack on all four sides, William T. Kelsey was a Sauk County judge.
- 14] Blacksmith Shop, 603 Water St., Sauk City. Later used as a hospital, now an office building.
- 15] Jack Meise House, 300 Polk St., Sauk City. Note the facade facing John Adams St. Built about 1860.
- 16] The Bird House, 215 Jackson St., Sauk City. The foundation facing John Adams St. has the block and stack pattern. The name recalls the Koenigs, who for many years kept and rehabilitated wild birds here.
- 17] Alonzo Waterbury House, 58821 Old Bluff Trail. The large scale and square proportions are in Yankee rather than Swiss or German taste.
- 18] Solomon Waterbury House, 58467 Old Bluff Trail. The window placement and plan show the Yankee influence.
- 19] Astle House, E9754A CTH. 'C'. Built in 1862. The wing attached to the gable end is a New England form.
- 20] Kindsch/Luck House, E10335 Luck Rd. Built in 1870 by Peter Kindschi. The wing incorporates an earlier stone building. The house has the geometric spacing of windows and narrower proportions favored by the Swiss and Germans.
- 21] Salem United Methodist Church of Honey Creek (Ragatz Church), S9505

In Madison ashlar was used to construct elegant buildings such as Bascom Hall on the UW campus. The joints between the stones were often highlighted with a strip of raised mortar, giving a fancy decorative texture to the wall. After the Civil War, decoration came more and more into fashion in clothing, furnishings and architecture. Textured stone, elaborate wood-work and fancy shingling were used on houses to express the economic success of the inhabitants and their aspirations toward a life of taste and refinement. In rural areas buildings were made of unfinished stone as it came from the quarry. The mason might use raised strips of mortar, laid over the rough surface, to imitate the square blocks of an ashlar wall. Sometimes finished rectangular blocks (quoins) were used to form the edges and corners of these "rubble" buildings.

From the 1850s to about 1885 three masons, John Peter Felix, Peter Kindschi and Caspar Steuber from the Swiss settlement at Honey Creek produced a pattern now called "Block and Stack." It required less labor than ashlar and produced a very strong wall with a pleasing alternation of large cut blocks and smaller stacks of unfinished stone (hence, "block and stack.") Strips of white mortar, laid along each joint, stood out boldly against the yellow stone and concealed the trick used to produce the ashlar-like effect: each large cut block was held in place by the stacks of stones above, below and to each side of it, which projected back into the wall. Thus, unlike ashlar, the block and stack surface was not a veneer. It was integral with the load-bearing wall.

These three masons built a number of houses for successful Yankee settlers, in styles that follow the changing architectural fashions of the mid-19th century. In the 1860s the area enjoyed a highly profitable hops boom, and suddenly many of the Swiss and German farmers found themselves wealthy. They expanded their houses or built new ones, in the upright-and-downing style favored by their neighbors from New England. Their version, however, was much more uniform in size and plan and more restrained in its wooden trimmings, with higher, narrower proportions and geometrically spaced windows. Today nine farmhouses in this style, built of local stone laid in the block and stack pattern, survive as testament to the success of their owners. Nineteen other buildings display the block and stack pattern. Together these 28 buildings are a unique heritage of the Roxbury/Sauk City/Prairie du Sac area and a symbol of its history.



FRONT VIEW

FRONT VIEW