

1803 HOUSE OF EMMAUS, PENNSYLVANIA - CORNERSTONE

One of my favorite things to do as a tour guide at the 1803 House is to explain to the young people how to build the 1803 House. I explain to them that with a plumb line they have to locate the four corners of the house. At each of the corners of the house, carefully dressed cubicle field stones are placed in perfect alignment with the plumb line. A series of cornerstones are placed one on top of the other in an interlocking pattern to establish the volume of the 1803 House.

Cornerstones are a monumental element of a structure. In ancient times, a sacrifice was placed under the cornerstone before it was placed. The cornerstone served as a marker and symbolically indicated that the spirit of the sacrifice actually supported the structure. The sacrifice was chosen by the shadow element cast on the stone corner. In our age, the sacrifice is represented by a symbolic laying of hands on the stone by a prominent public figure in the community. Sometimes sealed containers containing special memorabilia are encapsulated (sacrificed) at the stone corner.

The way the 1803 House is constructed provides a great deal of symbolism regarding its importance in the community. It stands with the other historic structures in our community which serve as the cornerstone of history of colonial Emmaus. We are fortunate they are being preserved. With the preservation of the 1803 House, the preservation of colonial Moravian History is in full view. Thanks to the Rodale's family and the Borough of Emmaus, we are able to tell the Emmaus Colonial Story.

Between these cornerstones are numerous field stones of random shape harvested from the neighboring hills. These stones are symbolic of the Emmaus community at large. They are placed in a more complex pattern and tie the whole volume together. Every stone has its place.

This is like the young people who visit our colonial house who are finding their place in the community.

At a Memory Day Celebration, Ardath Rodale made the following observation concerning the 1803 House of Emmaus, Pennsylvania: "...enjoy the present while we celebrate the past".

Written By Richard Farmer

