*From the 1930s through to the 1970s, Nantucket celebrated her cobblestone streets as “virtually maintenance free” and less expensive to maintain than asphalt. Prominent leaders – including the superintendent of streets – sought MORE cobblestone streets, not fewer. But since 1993, cobblestone Main Street has become a public works headache -- expensive, difficult to maintain and constantly in need of attention. The Department of Public Works is now seeking public comment regarding what to do about Main Street.*

*How did a maintenance-free street become a source of road-worker angst? A close read of the Inquirer & Mirror archives reveals a fascinating story of a time-tested skill that was lost, then found, then lost again. Can we bring it back?*

Summary Timeline: What We Know

* 1837 Nantucket sources cobblestones to pave Main Street. Street widened to create Main Street Square after the Great Fire of 1846.
* Brick sewer built under Main Street in 1853.
* 1875 - 1880: A private offer is made to pay for concreting of Main Street. Instead, Main street is regraded and recobbled, paid for by Mrs. Swain and Busey “best paving in town”.
* 1903 – 1906 First concreting/tarring of streets, paid for privately.
* 1902 Main Street from the Monument west is paved with yellow vitrified brick, which is still in tact today. *The town opted not to pave more roads in vitrified brick – this could be because it was expensive to bring over, whereas they had a contractor locally who was producing bituminous concrete. Also, vitrified brick was noisy.*
* 1909 – 1910 Town starts appropriating money for concreting/taring streets. Orange Street Hill concreted in 1910 “as an experiment”.
* 1914 Nantucket upgrades its sewers. Request for bids to build two miles of vitrified pipe sewers in Town and ‘Sconset. Presumably, Main Street dug up for this purpose.
* John C. Ring, Nantucket’s road contractor, is becoming very wealthy with concreting old roads and building new.  Some concern about his influence and conflicts of interest.
* 1918 - The new roads aren’t lasting – the tar wears through to the cobblestone. People are upset and complain. Ring stays in towns good graces (too bad they didn’t opt for the vitirified brick – it’s still there and in good condition!).
* 1918 – Auto Ban lifted (after 4 year debate)
* By 1919, after laying the new sewers, Main Street Square is in poor condition. Town wants to put concrete down on Main Street Square. I&M editors in support of concreted roads throughout.
* 1920 - 1922 Summer residents and the Civic League save Main Street Square from being concreted by forcefully turning out and fundraising for preservation.  But the town tells them they need to contract and pay for restoring the cobbles themselves.  No contractors on the island will bid on the work (they are all invested in concrete). Workmen come from Brockton, MA.
* 1924 - again, push to pave Main Street. Civic League comes out against it, this time on account of possible harm to the trees.
* 1926 - 1930 - major upgrades to gas, sewer, and water leave Main Street in terrible condition.
* 1931 - Frank Gifford, the President of the water company, committed to fixing the streets right. No masons on island to do the work. Off-island man fails to show up. Antone F. Sylvia, of the John C. Ring company, is trained to do the work.
* 1931 - 1972: Cobbles are looked after by on island masons Antone Sylvia, Thomas McGrath, and Tom McGrath Jr. Cobbles become a symbol of what makes Nantucket special and worth visiting. Streets become known as practically maintenance free. Tom McGrath Jr. interviewed by Charleston paper about the proper method for setting cobbles. McGrath’s team cobbles lower Main Street as part of waterfront revitalization.
* 1934 – 1944 High level of public interest in old elms, due to 1930s arrival of Dutch Elm Disease, and apparent death and decline of Nantucket’s elms. Civic League sponsors research, published pamphlet, comes out against asphalt for protection of trees
* 1966: Sherburne Associates plans revitalization of the Waterfront at Straight Wharf. Loads of cobblestone brought over for paving. Easy Street connected to Main Street. Main Street paved from Easy Street to Straight Wharf. Trees planted at the waterfront
* 1972 - 1977: Love affair with cobbles continues - discussion about expanding them to lower India/Pearl street and Union Street. Maintenance is performed by off-island teams. Reputation of cobbles as “maintenance free” continues.  However, it’s hard to justify the cost of laying more, when modern road making is fast, cheap, and relatively easy, and there is not a local reliable source for maintenance.
* 1983 - 1985: $3 million, two year roadwork project. Major roadwork everywhere by Walter Glowacki. (phase I) North Water Street Belgian block layed, many concerns and inspections ordered. Phase II - tension with engineer Shugrue and contractor Glowacki. Painful experience for all involved. India Street and S. Water between India and Main are returned to cobbles. But town is fatigued.
* 1993 - Main Street is dug up to put the electrical cables underground. Telephone company manages the work. The work looks awful - many people complain about quality of work and appearance of streets afterwards.
* 2006 - Main Street has hollows in places. Victor Brandon contracted to dig it up, lay a new foundation, and fix the cobbles.
* 2009 - major excavation because of sewer work. Vernon Brandon puts the street back together.  Workman says they are laying stones in stone dust, not sand (check specs with DPW?)
* 2013: Huge hollow in front of Pacific Club where trucks drive over Main Street. Vernon Brandon digs this up and fills in road bed, relays cobbles.
* Today – upper Main Street full of hollows and loose cobbles.

**Detailed References – I&M archive**

[1853](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NWM%2F1853%2F02%2F05&id=Ar00302&sk=0B094F94&viewMode=image) – proposition 18 to pave (with cobbles) the upper part of Liberty Street and build a brick sewer running from Main Street to Pearl (india) Street commencing at Winter Street.

[1875](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=IRW%2F1875%2F07%2F27&id=Ar00200&sk=2D0D4122&viewMode=image) – Anonymous offer of $1,000 to concrete Main Street. The street is “rather dilapidated” though by no means unusable or unsafe

[1880](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1880%2F09%2F04&id=Ar00202&sk=B8B5A508&viewMode=image): Main Street is being repaired by Mrs. Swain and Barney – crowned in the center to direct the water away to the gutters. “best paving in town”

[1884](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1884%2F02%2F09&id=Ar00405&sk=4A83B0A1&viewMode=image) Discussion of Brick Sewers vs glazed pipe sewers. Evidence of Nantucket starting to upgrade its sewer system. February 9, 1884 I&M

[1/24/1884](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NJL%2F1884%2F01%2F24&id=Ar00215&sk=EA658927&viewMode=image) Letter about building adequate pipe sewers and water system for the town.

[1885](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1885%2F12%2F19&id=Ar00201&sk=758BEBDF&viewMode=image) – lovely story of visiting Nantucket.

[1891](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1891%2F03%2F21&id=Ar00703&sk=82A43104&viewMode=image) on how to have well draining even roads: top them with cobblestone if you can

[10/14/1893](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1893%2F10%2F14&id=Ar00103&sk=D0F52C34&viewMode=image) Article to prohibit anyone from digging up streets for sewers or trees without the permission of the superintendent of streets.

[1900](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1900%2F03%2F31&id=Ar00104&sk=48C223AF&viewMode=image) – though macadam is available, they are still paving with cobblestone. [Repaved](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1900%2F06%2F02&id=Ar00414&sk=CF853E72&viewMode=image) Pearl Street (india) with cobblestone.

[1/26/1901](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1901%2F01%2F26&id=Ar00405&sk=74865C17&viewMode=image) Article 24 – to pave a portion of Main street with macadam from the end of cobbles west to Saratoga Cost is $3,500 (macadam is very expensive!) *Note: Main Street north of the monument was paved with vitrified brick. Discussion in 1899 – 1902 about using vitrified brick. It had been selected for City of Cambridge. Why wasn’t the practice continued? Probably because there was an on-island contractor invested in bituminous concrete and it could be mixed on the island. If only our earlier leaders had invested in vitrified brick! They would have saved money over the long run.*

[7/12/1902](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1902%2F07%2F12&id=Ar00400&sk=BEA460FD&viewMode=image) – laying concrete over liberty and hussy street cobbles, paid for by private subscription.

[3/14/1903](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1903%2F03%2F14&id=Ar00102&sk=51594DC3&viewMode=image) John Ring of John Ring Construction appealed to sell the harvested cobbles back to the town. (also town contracted with Rockport Granite for curbing 4” wide and 14 inches deep). There are issues with sand washing down Main Street to water street and needs to be removed.

Here and There – [May 30 1903](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1903%2F05%2F30&id=Ar00401&sk=F9BC3F7E&viewMode=image) – work of both cobblestone and concrete is being done on Liberty Street. Using off-island workmen “a gang of workmen arrived on Liberty Street to lay the cobbles”.

In [1903](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1903%2F08%2F01&id=Ar00404&sk=52979A8A&viewMode=image) they rebuilt beach street with cobblestones. Some were brought to the island, some were dug up from the old beach street, and some were brought from Liberty Street where it was paved by private subscription.

[March 31, 1906](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1906%2F03%2F31&id=Ar00400&sk=7F866377&viewMode=image): south water street cobbles are dug up to lay water, sewage, and surface drainage.

May 5 1906 – lower india street is ready to receive its concreted surface. Will still have stone gutters next to the curbs. S. water street is being recobbled.

[2/9/1907](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1907%2F02%2F09&id=Ar00409&sk=598D7AD8&viewMode=image) Cobblestones! Concrete! Noise! Allen Coffin writes in to say concrete is NOT quieter than cobblestone – he knows because he lives by the monument where the cobblestone ends and the vitrified brick begins. Removing concrete to alleviate noise is money wasted.

[July 6, 1907](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1907%2F07%2F06&id=Ar00401&sk=D8810549&viewMode=image) Cobblestone on Center Street Hill (near lily street) are being relayed.

July 13 1907 – more cobblestones arriving on the island

[June 20 1908](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1908%2F06%2F20&id=Ar00239&sk=38AC4877&viewMode=image) – sweet mention of the grass growing through the cobblestone in front of the bank

[11/6/1909](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1909%2F11%2F06&id=Ar00111&sk=7CA5BE5E&viewMode=image) beautiful observation of Nantucket in October

2/19/1910 – money appropriated to put concrete over the cobbles of main street. (first time this is done by the town? Prior was private subscription)

[7/9/1910](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1910%2F07%2F09&id=Ar00119&sk=137F3D04&viewMode=image) Orange Street Hill is concreted “as an experiment”.

[2/26/1910](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1910%2F02%2F26&id=Ar00416&sk=306E84AE&viewMode=image) A letter requesting that the town resist any plans to put concrete over the Main Street square.

October 11, 1913 – John C Ring is paid for re-laying cobblestone on Union and Orange Street.

[11/22/1913](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1913%2F11%2F22&id=Ar00319&sk=AE3DCFFC&viewMode=image) – sweet article with memories of Nantucket – including remembering the deep ruts that were on india street (pearl) before it was paved. She talks about the small lanes – (I realize that all the roads have been widened and straightened for cars – the roads no longer look the same).

[4/11/1914](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1914%2F04%2F11&id=Ar00412&sk=6D90A225&viewMode=image) Request for bids for building approx. 2 miles of vitrified pipe sewer in ‘Sconset at Nantucket Town

Annual meeting 2/7/1914 – more talk about concreting over cobbled streets. Still using cobblestone for lining the gutters at the side of the streets.

1914 – vote to lift the auto ban (first but not final? Apparently people objected that the vote was not [fair](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1918%2F05%2F11&id=Ar00419&sk=C1EA6BF0&viewMode=image)

[5/11/1918](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1918%2F05%2F11&id=Ar00417&sk=F96B2E20&viewMode=image) There is more discussion about bringing the auto to Nantucket. The tarred and concreted roads are wearing through to the cobblestone. Obligation to maintain the roads.

One person writes in (anonymous) that the work is not being done permanently and all the work is done by only one company (John C. Ring) it’s a waste of taxpayer money.

[5/11/1918](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1918%2F05%2F11&id=Ar00603&sk=08EC21CF&viewMode=image) list of what Nantucket has spent on roads

[John C. Ring –](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1921%2F02%2F12&id=Ar00205&sk=D8D21EAB&viewMode=image) the road contractor – gets the largest share of town disbursements 5 years in a row

*There seems to be building resentment that the concrete roads are not lasting long. Islanders are becoming acquainted with the upkeep required on these roads, which are variously called “oil roads” concreted, and tarred. Some sentiment that John Ring is not doing his job well – they actually measure the amount of tar laid on India Street to make sure it is what he said it is. John Ring is becoming rich from all the work. Some charge he influenced the vote to lift the auto ban. Somehow, Ring must have made good – he continues in good standing and has a presence in civil society. He takes a trip along with the Selectmen to New Bedford, they have fun.*

July 26, 1919: Main Street: Cobbles, Concrete, vs. Sentiment page [one](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1919%2F07%2F26&id=Ar00100&sk=2866CC8C&viewMode=image) page [two](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1919%2F07%2F26&id=Ar00520&sk=7646D73A&viewMode=image)

The I&M endorses laying concrete over the Main Street Square – claiming the convenience of concrete will win out, and visitors will continue to love Nantucket regardless. The Civic League endorses the opposite view. Here and there [July 12, 1919](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1919%2F07%2F12&id=Ar00611&sk=AC1044CC&viewMode=image) “9 out of 10 people you stop and ask say they wish to see the concrete extended”. Others [petition](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NAV%2F1919%2F09%2F01&id=Ar00303&sk=27369363&viewMode=image) to keep the cobbles, for traffic calming, care of the trees, as well as sentiment.  *By this time, Nantucket had excavated to lay water and sewer lines under Main Street in earlier years. The street was in terrible condition – no doubt for the same reason it was after 1926, and 1993 – there were no local contractors willing to work on cobblestone because they were all very busy making money concreting the streets. Until utilities started digging up the streets, it appears the streets had been self maintaining.*

[1921](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1922%2F02%2F11&id=Ar00415&sk=E3ED8A8C&viewMode=image)-1922: Summer Residents petition successfully via letters to the I&M and in-person appeals – including by a group of vocal ladies who came to an advisory board meeting in [February of 1922](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1922%2F02%2F11&id=Ar00415&sk=E3ED8A8C&viewMode=image) -- to save upper Main Street from being paved over. The ladies revealed they had raised $2,200 to repair the cobbles. The Selectmen agree to halt the plan to pave the street with concrete, but say the petitioners must manage the project to repair the cobbles themselves. [Link](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1922%2F03%2F18&id=Ar00113&sk=0DE137AB&viewMode=image). And also [3/18/1922](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1922%2F03%2F18&id=Ar00100&sk=8BC981D6&viewMode=image)

February 17, 1923: Contentious [Letter](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1923%2F02%2F17&id=Ar00300&sk=8FE613B2&viewMode=image) from Linsly Johnson (the owner of the Middle Brick), opposing Article 88, for the installation of a concrete crosswalk on Main Street. Letter describes the restoration work of Main Street Cobbles, contracted for and paid for by summer residents, an effort he chaired, which included careful restoration of the flagstone crosswalk. Work was contracted via a Brockton contractor, because all the local contractors declined the work.

March 31, 1923: [discussion](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1923%2F03%2F31&id=Ar00117&sk=0819A9EC&viewMode=image) of maintaining the cobbles. Sand should be spread over cobbles, to ensure they remain firmly bedded. Excess sand was not removed, washed down to the catch basin, and caused damage at the wharf.

[May 26, 1923](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1923%2F05%2F26&id=Ar00100&sk=21E3F414&viewMode=image): Another cobble road was found about 3.5’ under the existing sidewalk on Main Street. It was discovered when workers excavated the large stump of an elm. Mystery. (same layer was found in [1889](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1889%2F06%2F15&id=Ar00207&sk=BF6BBDFA&viewMode=image) – also a mystery then! I wonder if this is an effect of the square having been widened – they paved over the original street when the old buildings burned and they decided to make the square wider – did they also move it?)

October 11, 1924: A rumor about paving Main Street is again circulating. Letter to the [editor](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1924%2F10%2F11&id=Ar00300&sk=A0CD80F3&viewMode=image) arguing to save the cobbles.

[8/9/24](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1924%2F08%2F09&id=Ar00501&sk=C6908A55&viewMode=image) – civic league comes out against persistent call about paving Main Street, on account of concern of damage to the trees.

[February 27, 1926](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1926%2F02%2F27&id=Ar00400&sk=74FD72B9&viewMode=image): Cobbles are dug up for laying of sewer. Concern about follow on effects. [April 3, 1926](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1926%2F04%2F03&id=Ar00400&sk=1117ED27&viewMode=image): The streets may never be the same again! [May 1, 1926](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1926%2F05%2F01&id=Ar00119&sk=191C434F&viewMode=image): hills and hollows remain in the street, after sewer work.

[May 3, 1930](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1930%2F05%2F03&id=Ar00123&sk=5C2A09F9&viewMode=image) After installation of a water main, Main Street remains without cobble paving because of lack of skilled workmen. Frank Gifford, head of water department, is determined to find an expert paver to make sure the street is properly repaired. [May 10, 1930](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1930%2F05%2F10&id=Ar00617&sk=BC57AE18&viewMode=image): expert paver refused to show up for work, another was sourced. [May 24, 1930](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1930%2F05%2F24&id=Ar00400&sk=901A46BC&viewMode=image) Paving is complete but tons of cobbles are left over and hauled away to the lot (fewer stones were put back than were originally there).

[January 31, 1931](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1931%2F01%2F03&id=Ar00408&sk=8A1F4993&viewMode=image) Antone F. Sylvia has started relaying the Main Street cobbles which were disturbed again in order that a new gas main might be laid.

[November 21, 1931](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1931%2F11%2F21&id=Ar00400&sk=0FE6D829&viewMode=image): Water main, sewer, and gas lines have all been replaced with new capacity, and the cobbles may finally have a chance to rest. [August 20, 1932](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1932%2F08%2F20&id=Ar00216&sk=B3B435C9&viewMode=image) “have you noticed that the grass is growing between the cobble stones of Main Street?”

There were excess stones left after the work – fewer stones were put back into the street than were taken out.

[November 27, 1937](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1937%2F11%2F27&id=Ar00400&sk=7F322EE6&viewMode=image): Antoine Sylvia has finished laying the cobbles after installation of a new gas main. “he swears he layed each stone right side up”.

*Apparently Gifford never found an expert paver – he must have turned to the on-island road builder John C. Ring, and demanded Ring, who was made a rich man as the King of Concrete, get back into the cobble business. Ring tapped Antone F. Sylvia and Sylvia became Nantucket’s on island mason. Over the course of his life he recobbled all of Main Street. He worked with Tom McGrath (see 1950s/1960s) there is mention of them together in social activites. Sylvia* [*Obituary*](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1961%2F10%2F27&id=Ar00614&sk=D1F1C4C0&viewMode=image)

1934 – Concern that Dutch Elm Disease might come to Nantucket *Trees were planted in the 1850s as part of the revitalization of the Main Street square after the fire. There was increased focus on the trees in the 1930s because the trees were starting to decline (people didn’t know always know why) and because Dutch Elm disease appeared in NJ in 1934.*

[June 8 1935](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1935%2F06%2F08&id=Ar00301&sk=29847A93&viewMode=image): arborist from boston believes Tree deaths caused by gas leaks. Elms suffered salt damage in storm

[4/28/1934](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1934%2F04%2F28&id=Ar00206&sk=9D0C7E84&viewMode=image) – saving the Elms – won’t lose them to road widening.

[Gas Leaks / Elms](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1935%2F06%2F08&id=Ar00301&sk=29847A93&viewMode=image)

[10/28/1944](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1944%2F10%2F28&id=Ar00317&sk=94E9417A&viewMode=image) letter to the editor about suitable tree species notes that trees have declined due to asphalting of roads and Nantucket cannot expect to grow large trees on any areas that are paved or asphalted or along narrow sidewalks. Tree health has declined since asphalt has gone in. By Bassett Jones of Civic League

12/6/1947 Letter discussing threat to elms, and why elms did well earlier but won’t do well now.

[2/16/46](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1946%2F02%2F16&id=Ar00200&sk=3372E946&viewMode=image) Two hurricanes in 1945 blew over 25 of the big elms. Discussion of plan to plant trees. Problems with concrete sidewalks. A.E. Marshall declares he is planting trees outside his home on Main Street (89 Main Street).

*Find a copy of New Trees of No Trees by Henry Reppa published 1945 by the Civic League More coverage of Reppa’s booklet.* [*Here*](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1946%2F02%2F09&id=Ar00104&sk=39BF7B19&viewMode=image)

[February 22, 1947](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1947%2F02%2F22&id=Ar00414&sk=8EE12688&viewMode=image): Discussion of “Main Street’s historic cobbles needed repair” in many places. Problems come from street being torn up for utilities and then repatched. A patch will never be as good as new. “We need to hold the utilities accountable”. [March 15, 1947](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1947%2F03%2F15&id=Ar00200&sk=22E8F80D&viewMode=image): town appropriates money to fill in and relay cobblestones on Main Street from the bank to pleasant street. $500.00 note: this amount is small relative to other appropriations. e.g. $2,500 was recommended for bituminous concrete paving of McKinley Ave in Siasconset.

[January 12, 1952](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1952%2F01%2F26&id=Ar00402&sk=B89BE786&viewMode=image): Public opinion regarding exposing the cobbles on India Street. A resident [recalls](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1952%2F02%2F02&id=Ar00400&sk=87D761E2&viewMode=image) on Feb 2, 1952 that India Street when cobbled was always rutted, because the ground was soft and could not support cobblestones. Many letter opposing cobbles on India Street, [here](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1952%2F02%2F16&id=Ar00402&sk=822C3DF9&viewMode=image) is one from A. Cobblestone’s point of view. Editorial in the I&M in favor of keeping bituminous concrete on India Street. *The main objections to the cobbles was noise and they were hard on cars. There was some objection to them being hard to cross on foot – but mainly the cars (the concrete streets had cobblestone gutters on either side). Cars at them time were heavier and had poor suspension. Today, the ride is softer and quieter.*

[February 9, 1957](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1957%2F02%2F09&id=Ar00123&sk=64560ED6&viewMode=image): $1,000 appropriated to relay sections of the cobblestones on Main Street.

[August 15, 1958](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1958%2F08%2F15&id=Ar00110&sk=557F1F02&viewMode=image): Selectman Barrett asks the superintendent of streets to remove the tar strip covering the cobblestones on Main Street from Pine Street to Winter Street. [May 11, 1962](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1962%2F05%2F11&id=Ar00312&sk=8B944D44&viewMode=image): Picture of stones being relayed at location.

[August 22, 1958](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1958%2F08%2F22&id=Ar00200&sk=F26024AD&viewMode=image): John A. Stackpole, editor of I&M, writes an editorial about “Nantucket Standards”. “The wise thing is to make the auto adapt itself to Nantucket and not allow the island to become another victim of the gasoline age”….for example, have we not retained Old Main Street? I recall full well the agitation of 1921 when shortsighted islanders attempted to tar those ancient cobbles….”

[March 24, 1966](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1966%2F03%2F24&id=Ar00119&sk=A149CE84&viewMode=image)Walter Bienecke / Sherburne Associates plans revitalization of the Waterfront at Straight Wharf. Easy Street connected to Main Street. Main Street paved from Easy Street to Straight Wharf. Trees planted at the waterfront [July 1966](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1966%2F04%2F28&id=Ar00224&sk=E32DE961&viewMode=image): loads of cobbles coming over from the mainland. Stones are laid by Tom McGrath.

[*I&M Thursday September 28, 1967*](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1967%2F09%2F28&id=Ar00605&sk=8B1A3B6E&viewMode=image)

*“Yankees Conquered Cobblestones”*

*Reprinted from the Charleston Evening Post*

(excerpt)

This cobblestone street thing, says Public Works superintendent Michael Driscoll of the town of Nantucket, is really very simple…. Driscoll says, “the usual story about these cobbles having come to the island as ballast is not true. The cobbles used in Nantucket were selected for paving streets, and perhaps this is why we have had very little trouble with them over the years.

A good cobblestone is egg or pear shaped and is set so that the long axis is vertical with the narrow or pointed end in the base course. Tom McGrath, a mason who learned his trade as a youngster working for his father and who has done the majority of the maintenance work on our cobblestone streets for the last 28 years and his father before him for probably an equal length of time tells me that the proper bed for cobblestones is 3 to 4 inches of “dirty sand“ i.e. sand was sufficient find powdered material so that it will hold together when squeezed, but the mixture should not become muddy when wet...Driscoll says they have no problems with freezes. Water drains right through the sand before it freezes. The only problem is occasionally a motorist spinning a wheel and flipping out a stone. He says, however, that it is no more than a 15 minute job to replace a few like that and really the only trick is to put the most pointed end down. In other words, get the stone sunk as deep as possible into the dirty sand base with a relatively small area of each stone on the surface. This he says is much better than skimping on stones and having the largest side lying flat on top of the ground.

[*Thursday September 5, 1968*](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1968%2F09%2F05&id=Ar00803&sk=4FEF1426&viewMode=image)*: Photograph of Cobblestone Hill*

“The old cobblestone road leading from the beach road to the cliff has been a connecting link for 75 years and has outlasted many a macadamized road. A tar or concrete service would’ve created a waterfall during a rainstorm but the cobbles provide a more natural course for surface water as well as providing a scenic quality which any other type of road could never boast.

January 1973: Selectmen call for DPW to repair cobbled Main Street, because stones are coming loose and certain areas need to be relayed. (*note: Thomas McGrath passed away in his sleep in 1972 at age 47).*

October 1974: Town contracts with Cape Cod & Island Construction for cobblestone repair. Priced on a sq. yard basis.

[July 28, 1977](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1977%2F07%2F28&id=Ar02200&sk=9BCE1DEF&viewMode=image) “The Way We Were - And Could be Again”

Edouard A. Stackpole advocates for exposing more cobble and block paving, citing the low cost of maintaining these streets, relative to macadam streets. “there is a stretch of Belgian paving block that was laid 75 years ago. Since then, there has never been $100 spent on maintenance of that area of block.” *(note: he must be referring to the vitrified brick north of the monument…this was put down in 1902 and never changed. There was never Belgian block at this location)* “The DPW doesn’t even touch it” said Superintendent Bud Clute. “And it’s the same with the Cobblestones....They are virtually maintenance free” he added. … Exposing the existing block and cobblestones may be an expensive project initially, Clute admits, but will be much less costly in the long run, because of lack of maintenance. And instead of cutting up the street to install sewer connections, the cobblestones can just be removed and replaced”. Blocks and cobblestones are also not subject to potholes caused by freezing and spilling of solvents” pointed out Finance Committee member Norman Beach.

7/19/1979 – letter in favor of more cobblestone and to add a granite slab bike lane on all cobbled Nantucket roads.

October 18, 1979: In response to public comment, Town decides to halt process of returning additional streets to cobblestones – a project they began in 1978. *(note: not sure what if anything was recobbled during this period)* Residents were opposed to more cobblestones because of difficulty of walking, biking, and auto alignment problems. “Selectman Roger Young said last night that he was originally in favor of exposing the cobblestones but changed his mind after watching the paving machine work on roads last summer. “the new machine just heats the tar that’s there and puts in new tar” Young explained. (laying streets is now so easy and efficient)

[October 25, 1979](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1979%2F10%2F25&id=Ar00200&sk=31FD15EC&viewMode=image): Letter from K. Dun Gifford in favor of Cobblestones. Also see letters in October 1979 against Cobbles because they are hard to walk on when the sidewalks are covered with snow or parked over.

[April 28, 1983:](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1983%2F04%2F28&id=Ar01109&sk=D06BF64D&viewMode=image) Cobblestones making a comeback. Despite earlier decision to halt more cobbles, town has decided to put stones back on north Union Street and lower India Street. Crew is Walter Glowacki. It took 5 days to cobble North Union Street. Stones are being sourced from underneath other pavement. The cost to restore lower India street is $50,000. But the reason for doing it is that cobblestones will be cheaper to maintain over time. *Note: The old-timers who remembered how poorly cobbles had faired on India Street in the past (because of the soft road bed) were apparently not around to object. Head engineer, Shugrue, said the cobbles had lasted since 1850 (ha!!).*

[May 5 1983](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1983%2F05%2F05&id=Ar00105&sk=7F5813E6&viewMode=image): Shugrue raked over the coals by selectmen, work a disaster of poor planning. Oak street was going to be cobbled, but selectmen ordered him to pave it instead when he said they weren’t sure they’d have enough cobbles.

[5/26/1983](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1983%2F05%2F26&id=Ar00502&sk=775B2D92&viewMode=image): review of scope of transportation projects

[6/2/1983](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1983%2F06%2F02&id=Ar00106&sk=C8CA32A4&viewMode=image): Complaints about Glowacki and engineer Shugrue meeting specifications on Belgian Block work on N. Water Street. Blocks not laid to specifications. Shugrue wrote the specs but is not enforcing them – can we see the specs?

[6/23/1983](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1983%2F06%2F23&id=Ar00105&sk=219E4F1F&viewMode=image): town decides to hire engineering firm Vanasse/Hangen to inspect Phase I work on North Water St. where they believe Walter Glowacki did not lay the blocks correctly. They agreed to produce a report with photos and tests in multiple areas (*Note: can we see this engineering study?* *what can we learn about the laying of this street? It is not in good condition today.)*

[August, 18 1983](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1983%2F08%2F18&id=Ar00109&sk=27429DAF&viewMode=image) Phase II of roadwork. Decision not to cobble Orange Street from Stone Alley to Main Street (the Hill) because “the Selectmen agreed with Superintendent Don Oliver that heavy rains on the hill might wash the sand from between the cobbles (this did happen in [1889](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NJL%2F1889%2F08%2F15&id=Ar00202&sk=D7EAA408&viewMode=image). The practice was to spread sand for comfort and stability of the stones) and that passage on the stones in winter could be treacherous.

[April 26, 1984](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1984%2F04%2F26&id=Ar00404&sk=7600D794&viewMode=image) despite some people getting tired of all the road work, the selectmen approved, at a cost of $19,200, extending the cobbles from Main Street onto South Water street and meeting the current cobbles on lower pearl street. (now India Street).

[June 16, 1984](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1984%2F02%2F16&id=Ar00103&sk=7BB4524C&viewMode=image): Funds released to Glowacki because he has addressed problems with Belgian Block on N. Water street. There had been concern that the fill between the blocks would not hold. *Note: when you go to North Water Street today, you see there is little fill between the blocks.*

[July 12, 1984](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1984%2F07%2F12&id=Ar00105&sk=AA401BC8&viewMode=image): Impasse with Glowacki over quality of roadwork in ‘Sconset

Note: discussion of getting local contractor Glowacki back into bidding on the street project [here](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1982%2F06%2F03&id=Ar00106&sk=B49BDF48&viewMode=image).

[11/8/1984](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1984%2F11%2F08&id=Ar00504&sk=C8DAC401&viewMode=image) $70K set aside for cobbles on India but selectmen did not say this would definitely be done.

[February 14, 1985](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1985%2F02%2F14&id=Ar01100&sk=0D798224&viewMode=image): article in town meeting to vote to finish certain streets in blacktop, not cobblestone, and donate the difference in cost to Oxfam. (Must not have passed – because S. water from Main to India is now cobbled.

February 25, 1993: All of Main Street is ripped up and utility lines buried. Paid for by a rate increase in place since 1982.

[February 25, 1993](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F1993%2F02%2F25&id=Ar01201&sk=72FCA54F&viewMode=image) Mary Ann Stanton writes about the mess of the cobbles on Main Street.

March 25, 1993: Concern that work is not being done right, grading is poor, stones improperly set.

April 1993: work is complete.

[March 30, 2006](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F2006%2F03%2F30&id=Ar01202&sk=44743C2D&viewMode=image): David Goodman comments on work done outside the pacific club: “heavy Use had made the stones sink. Digging the the whole mess out, putting in a new base, and resetting the cobbles made for a beautiful job.

[April 6, 2006](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F2006%2F04%2F06&id=Ar00102&sk=6FC1A24F&viewMode=image): Victor Brandon trained a crew to repair cobbles on S. Water and Main Street, where they had become sunken. Worker interviewed noted the cobbles had been placed lengthwise, not up and down, and this allowed them to shift. They are relaying them up and down, so they are tighter together and won’t move, Also, they are laying them in compacted stone dust with more stone dust (not sand)

[September 27, 2007](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F2007%2F09%2F27&id=Ar01218&sk=84421C44&viewMode=image) David Goodman speculates on how pleasant it would be to re-cobble streets downtown. How hard could it be (!!)

February 5, 2009 - next round of sewer work. “Digging up the downtown makes Main Street feel even colder than it already is….downtown now looks like dozens of bombs have been dropped on the streets”.

2001 – Valeros is selling Nantucket Cobblestone – where did these come from?

[May 23, 2013](http://digital.olivesoftware.com/Olive/APA/Nantucket/SharedView.Article.aspx?href=NIM%2F2013%2F05%2F23&id=Ar01610&sk=00278360&viewMode=text): David Goodman laments sunken areas on upper main street – where utilities dug up and repatched the road. “before the final bill is paid, this work needs to be done properly”.

April 14, 2016: Beta Engineering of RI rates all the roads on Nantucket. Portions of Main Street and New Whale Lane are listed in poor condition where as the western most portion of N. Water St. and Liberty Street are listed in good condition. Most of the cobblestone roads fall in the fair category. Cost to maintain the cobblestone and block roads are estimated by Beta to be $1m per year (*note: how did they calculate this and how is it even possible*?).