

What's That Stone?

or A Stone by Any Other Name.....

Many older homes, churches and other structures in our area have foundations or chimneys constructed of a reddish-brown stone. The stone's color is derived from its high iron content, and the glistening sand particles that make up much of it can be seen upon closer observation. Quartz pebbles are often imbedded in the stone as well. The names locally applied to this building material include sandstone, ironstone and bog iron, often resulting in confusion as to its make-up and origin. Each of these terms contain a degree of truth, since all of the rocks mentioned are made up of varying proportions of sand and iron. The biggest difference is in the age of the stone and the location from which it is obtained. Bog iron is the geologic in-

fant of the group, having formed the most recently. Dissolved iron salts which have seeped into slow-moving Pine Barren streams are acted upon by the presence of oxygen and certain bacteria, being turned into an iron "sludge" that collects in the stream banks. Over time this material combines with sand and gravel and hardens somewhat. This was the material that was dug to supply the many Pine Barrens iron furnaces with ore. While useful for this purpose, it normally would have been far too soft and crumbly to be used as a building material. For construction purposes, early settlers would have gathered sandstone or ironstone from much drier upland areas.

This type of rock could have formed un-

der varying circumstances, but all of them long, long ago. While useful for building, its iron content was too low for it to be useful as a source of ore.

Old maps of the site where the Tucker-ton Seaport is now located show a sand road identified as "Quarry Road" winding its way along the west bank of Tucker-ton Creek, and sandstone can be seen protruding from hilly areas on the property to this day. Many of the local structures likely contain stone collected from this site. The next time you have opportunity to admire one of our treasured older buildings, take a moment to see if you can spot some of the even older materials which our native landscape contributed to its construction.