

# BUILT FROM STONE

## THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME  
3 of 52

### FROM USEFUL TO AESTHETIC (1846-1860 AND THEN 1860-1880)

It's hard to imagine in 1892 that 4,000 of the town's 7,000 residents (57%) were directly or indirectly involved in the granite industry. In the early years of the granite industry stonecutters had focused on practical items such as the walls, foundations, steps and hitching posts which are still found everywhere in Westerly.

As the nation matured, so did the granite industry which was in an excellent position to make the transition to producing works of art. Westerly's granite was ideal; its fine grain, uniform color, strength and easy workability were the characteristics needed for the finest monuments.

As the market moved to more elaborate monuments, the granite companies recruited talented stonecutters from Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Finland, and the United States. These highly-skilled stonecutters needed to produce a more finely finished surface on the stone, cut letters, and carve moldings and decorative designs. As the trade developed, men began to specialize. Specific skills were needed by letter cutters; different skills were needed by carvers. A hierarchy developed—apprentices, journeymen, letter cutters, carvers, statue cutters. The further up the hierarchy, the greater the prestige and the greater the hourly wage.



Early monuments include the Orlando Smith obelisk, a cenotaph, now located on the grounds of the Babcock-Smith House. A cenotaph is a monument erected in honor of a person or group of people whose remains are elsewhere.



The wall around the Babcock-Smith House is an example of walls done during the transitional period. A close look reveals a hitching post near the wooden gate.

Everyone would want to be a part of this boom. Small companies would spring up. Quarries would open and close, leaving slabs of rock for hikers to find today in the middle of the woods. Men would flock to Westerly for employment.

In 1880, with the raw material available, the craftsmen in place, and the product in demand, the industry was poised to become nationally famous.

Linda Smith Chaffee

Westerly Granite Monuments are confirmed in the shaded states.  
Number of monuments in each state:



CA-29	MO-21
CT-315	MS-1
DC-11	NE-5
DE-16	NH-14
FL-4	NJ-122
GA-54	NY-574
IA-28	OH-116
IL-98	OR-4
IN-13	PA-411
KS-1	RI-598
KY-8	TN-4
MA-399	VA-19
MD-31	VT-11
ME-37	WI-41
MI-38	WV-4
MN-7	

### TODAY IN GRANITE

UNITED BUILDERS SUPPLY, along with the Babcock-Smith House Museum and The Westerly Sun, is proud to be part of this effort in bringing the heritage of the Westerly Granite industry back to the people of Westerly.

A treasure from the past, United Builders Supply is excited to be able to offer these historic granites to the marketplace again.

Westerly Granite is again being used successfully in the region.

All masonry materials were supplied by United Builders Supply Co., Inc.



This picture shows the use of Westerly Pink in a recent restoration of a historic wall in Watch Hill. Westerly Pink was integrated with existing stones on the site to restore the wall to its' original splendor.

### STONECUTTERS' HOMES



John DeRocchi, talented statue carver, lived at 83 John Street. Just across Granite St. from this house, he cut a delicate statue that would mark his own grave. After cutting stone all day long, he would work on this lovely statue in a chicken coop where Chen's restaurant is now located. It is said that his wife would not let him smoke in the house, so he and his friend Mansuette Comolli would gather in the chicken coop to smoke, talk and cut stone.



John Derocchi monument, River Bend Cemetery, Westerly, RI



Westerly Middle School students have recognized the importance of the granite industry in Westerly's history. Kayla Patten, Anika Kreckel, Paige Chighine, Adeline Hanssen, Amanda Boisclair, Alexandra Hayes and Alexis Hayes are pictured working on the mural.



The mural of the sculptors' studio at the Smith Granite Company, featuring two sculptors in the foreground and plaster models on the shelf above, is under the direction of art teacher John Tedeschi.

### PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY

#### DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Archie, Adam	Austin, George
Archie, David	Austin, G.W.
Archie, William	Austin, William B.
Archie, William G.	Auston, Alexander
Argia, Francesco	Autken, David
Armenio, Annabale	Autry, Curtus
Armstrong, Lednard	Babcock, Edwin
Arsia, Francesco	Babone, Sal
Auld, Andrew	Baggs, Milton P.
Austin, Alexander	Baird, Harry
Austin, Charles	Baldi, Frank
Austin, Charles W.	Ballato, Joun

### YOUR PART IN HISTORY

Share your stories, photos and artifacts. Be part of the BSH Granite Research Center.

Please call us at 401-377-8490 or 401-322-0452 or e-mail us at [builtfromstone@gmail.com](mailto:builtfromstone@gmail.com)

### COMING NEXT WEEK

A happy convergence of factors fuels the demand for monuments.



Babcock-Smith  
House Museum

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