

BUILT FROM STONE

THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME
21 OF 52

GARDENS AND HONORABLE WORK

"My father took his job to heart." Joe Terranova, 92, said. "When I was little, my father would come home, sit in the kitchen, and tell my mother all about some problem he had with drilling or blasting a rock at Smith Granite Company where he worked and I'd be listening. He and one of the Smiths (owners of the company) might spend a long time discussing a solution, and 99 percent of the time, they would be correct. There was mutual respect between the quarrymen and the Smiths."

Frank Terranova was one of the many Italians who, between 4:00 and 4:30, would cover Granite, then Tower, then Oak Streets on their way home from working on the hill. He, like so many other quarry workers, had come from Calabria early in the 1900's. In 1904 he put \$10.00 down as a deposit and borrowed \$2,000.00 from The Washington Trust to buy a house on Oak Street. Terranova says that most of these immigrants would never have been able to buy a

house in Acri. One of the first things the family did was to plant a garden because Calabria, in southern Italy, had been a great agricultural area. They might own some chickens or a pig, but most of the time they relied on the produce from their lush gardens. Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays were pasta days.

The sculptors and men who worked in the sheds tended to

come from Lombard, a section of northern Italy. At first, the two groups could not communicate with each other because of the different dialects, but gradually, a

Angelo Gradilone and his son Louis at work with an air drill on hard pink granite from Smith's North Quarry



BSH Museum



Retired quarryman Frank Terranova circa 1955

Joseph Terranova



Louis Giorno at the Smith Granite Company with a large cylinder turned with the lathe and packaged for travel

BSH Museum

happy middle ground was found.

"The greatest day of my father's life was when he went to the post office and became a citizen, which would have been during WWI. Because the first generation had very little formal education, they pushed their children to learn. My father mortgaged his house so that I could go to college. I want to stress, however, that they all believed that any honest work was honorable."

Terranova muses about the social distinctions in town. "Italians were not allowed to walk on Elm Street" which might be a slight exaggeration, "but when I was ten or twelve, Sam Nardone, a hard worker who had formed his own construction company, built a house on Elm Street, and every Italian in town walked ten feet above the ground."

It could be said that we all walk ten feet off the ground when we think of the contributions that these Italian immigrants made, be they quarrymen such as Frank Terranova with his skill in blasting or superb sculptors such as the Zerbarini brothers.

Joe Terranova, as told to Ellen L. Madison

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.

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



An open house was recently held at the Babcock Smith Museum in Westerly. United Builders Supply provided tools and stone from their "Westerly Pink" quarry for use in demonstrations. Bruce Brawlaey and Sai Capalbo, local stone masons from Westerly, demonstrated how to cut and dress granite using hand tools. A large piece of granite was split in half using "feathers and wedges." All work on the stones was done by hand, the only difference between 2010 and 1910 was the use of an electric drill to make the holes for the "feather and wedges."

PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Donovan, Thomas	Dowd, Charles
Dooley, James	Dowd, Charles M.
Dooley, Nicholas J.	Dowd, James
Dooly, Nicholas	Dower, Alfred
Dornan, John	Dower, Benjamin
Doud, Thomas	Dower, James B.
Dougherty, John	Dower, John
Douglas, A.	Dower, Nick
Douglas, Andrew	Dower, R. J.
Doust, John	Dower, Richard
Dow, John	Doyle, Felix
Dow, William	Drew, William
Dowd, C. M.	Driscoll, Grace

WHERE IN WESTERLY?



TOOLS OF THE TRADE



Shear poles at the Smith Granite Company lifting granite out of the quarry for the Hall shaft. The piece of granite was about 50 feet long and 6 feet on each side. It weighed over 50 tons. Special modifications were necessary for a lift of this magnitude.

BSH Museum

Shear poles, two tremendous poles connected at their top forming an "A" frame, were located at the edge of the quarry. The bottoms of the poles were fitted into rounded sockets cut into large blocks of granite. The "A" frame was guyed back and forward (east and west). By letting out the guys on the west side, the shear poles were allowed to slightly lean to the east out over the edge of the quarry. In that position they were able to make a vertical lift from the quarry floor. When a block of granite was just above the surface, the poles were leaned back to the west to swing the block of granite onto the ground between the poles away from the edge of the quarry. These poles were very large spars. They were as much as four feet in diameter at the bottom and three feet in diameter at the top where they were joined together forming the "A." Between the poles at the top, a large ring or a loop of chain was secured to the frame. Through this loop was fastened block-and-tackle that was powered by steam engines.

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

COMING NEXT WEEK

A Granite Family



Babcock-Smith
House Museum

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