

BUILT FROM STONE

THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME
23 of 52

FAMILY LIFE CONTINUES IN SPITE OF LOSS

Orlando Raymond Smith, elder son of Orlando Smith, was only eight years old when his father died in 1859. When he turned 21 in 1872, he became the second generation of Smiths to manage the Smith Granite Company until his death in 1898.

When Orlando married his first wife, Sarah Chapman, he built a new house across the laneway (now the corner of Granite and Cross Streets) from his mother's home, the present Babcock-Smith House. Fifteen months after their marriage, they had a daughter Anna Raymond Smith. Sarah died a year after the birth and "Baby Annie" lived only to age one and a half.

Nine months after the death of the baby, Orlando married his first wife's older sister Julia Chapman. For her he enlarged the house,



BSH Museum

The home of Orlando Raymond Smith during his second marriage. Note the wing on the north side of the house. Pictured are Orlando Raymond Smith, Jr. beside the goat and with sister Sarah behind the gate. Sisters Julia and Emeline are sitting on the steps and baby Martha is in her mother Julia's arms. Behind the children are Orlando Raymond Smith and perhaps his sister Julia.

adding a wing that included a new kitchen and an attached well house. He also added south-facing bay windows on the existing first and second floors. Orlando and Julia were married seventeen years and had one son and four daughters.

At the age of 41 Orlando Raymond Smith was widowed for the second time. This time he had five children to raise and a thriving business to manage. A year later he married the niece of his former two wives. His new bride, Jennie Chapman Smith, was 20 years his junior. When she moved into the house on Granite Street, Orlando made the house

special for her by adding a four-story tower, making an impressive Victorian home. A year later their first son Franklin was born; Isaac followed two years later and Edward two years after that. Just a month after Edward's birth, Orlando Raymond Smith died. Twenty-seven-year-old Jennie was left with her three sons under four, a twenty-one-year-old stepson and four teenage step daughters aged 19, 18, 15, and 13.

Orlando Raymond Smith had experienced the heyday of the granite industry. During this successful period, he had also owned several steamboats that operated on the Pawcatuck River. He was a member of the Fat Man's Society—those were the days when "portly" was a complimentary adjective implying success as well as describing physique. At the time of his death, he had been in negotiations with the Joseph Newall Company to enact a merger with the Smith Granite Company. This merger had not been completed at the time of his death. Hard times fell on the company, when the Joseph Newall Company sued to recover what it had invested in the ill-fated merger. The lawsuit was long and difficult and left the company without liquid capital to conduct business efficiently.

Twenty-one-year-old Orlando Raymond Smith, Jr., only six years younger than his step-mother, left Brown University and returned home to accept the challenges of the business and to assist in the raising of his siblings.

Linda Smith Chaffee



Clockwise from top left: Sarah Chapman Smith (1849-1874), the first wife of O.R. Smith; Orlando Raymond Smith (1851-1898); Julia Chapman Smith (1842-1892), second wife of O.R. Smith and sister of his first wife; Jennie Chapman Smith (1871-1963), third wife of Orlando Raymond Smith and niece of his first two wives, who was left with eight children when he died

All portraits courtesy BSH Museum



The home of Orlando Raymond Smith, 130 Granite Street, after his 1893 marriage to Jennie. Note the prominent new tower.

BSH Museum

TODAY IN GRANITE

Many different types of stone can be found in southern Rhode Island. "Rhode Island Round Mix" is a unique rounded stone that has many uses. "Rhode Island Round Mix" is shown here being used to create an outdoor kitchen at a residence in Westerly. The Mason, Aldo Renzi of Westerly, combined the round stone and bluestone in making this outdoor Bar-B-Q. All components of this kitchen/Bar-B-Q, including the grills and cabinets are available from United Builders Supply. The refrigerator is available from Dave Morrone at Morrone Appliances right here in Westerly.



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 Co., Inc. is excited to be able to offer these historic granites, a treasure from the past, to the marketplace again.

STONECUTTERS' HOMES

A short walk down the hill from the Smith Granite Company was the home of George Rae, polisher for the Smith Granite Company. It was the job of the polisher to rub the granite with increasing finer abrasives to bring the surface of the granite to a high gloss. Polishing was used to highlight certain features of a monument such as columns, panels or the name on the monument. Some monuments require a great deal of polishing—others only a tiny amount.

The home of George Rae, polisher for the Smith Granite Company, was at 38 School Street



Linda Smith Chaffee



BSH Museum

Left: The round die of the Dr. Oscar Barber monument in Elm Grove Cemetery, Mystic, CT features a polished round die and urn. George Rae polished these using a lathe.



BSH Museum

Right: Gravestone of George Rae, polished on every surface, gives testimony to his skill as a polisher.

STONE CHIPS

On professional relationships: If my father was going to go see Frank Sullivan in Sullivan's Quarry, he'd call up and say, "Frank, I want to come and see you." Frank would say, "Okay, come Tuesday." And you didn't go until Frank says "you come Tuesday" and Frank didn't come to the Smith Granite Company until these arrangements were made. You didn't just walk into somebody else's operation and start looking it over. You did it on invitation and quite often I'm sure they prepared for your visit.

Isaac J. Smith, Jr. (b.1922) in an interview in 1983

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 Town of Neighborhoods

PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Faverio, Antonio	Finnegan, Charles W.	Fontana, Charles (Carlo)
Faverio, John B.	Finnegan, Patrick	Fontana, Earnest
Fay, Chales	Fiore, Joseph	Fontana, R.
Federico, Dommico	Fitzgerald, Walter	Foos, Oscar
Feeley, Patrick	Flack, Magnus Y.	Foran, Patrick
Fehmer, Albert	Fletcher, Archer	Fox, John
Ferguson, Daniel	Flynn, Maurice	Franchi, R.
Ferguson, John	Flynn, Maurice W.	Francis, Absolom
Fiddes, Alexander	Flynn, Michael	Francis, Harry
Fiddes, James	Foley, John	Francis, Henry, Jr.
Filpa, John	Foley, William	



Babcock-Smith House Museum



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