

BUILT FROM STONE

THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME
24 of 52

A TOWN OF NEIGHBORHOODS

The sounds and smells of the North End and the Pond Street area are still fresh in the minds of many who still live there. At night people sat on the stoops sharing music, conversation and recipes — not just recipes for food but for tricks of the trade when it came to cutting that stone or building the perfect stone wall.

The older ones remember when men gathered at the corner of Pierce and Pond to wait for someone who had a car to take them up the hill or else rode their bicycles to work. They carried lunches and tools in their overworked hands and trade secrets in their heads. Kids got up early to ride their bikes hoping to get a few pennies to buy candy or to find the peanuts that the men might leave on the wall.

Recently, the four remaining Sposato sisters (at the home they grew up in on Pond Street) told of their father Santo Sposato riding his bicycle to the Smith Quarry and in later years meeting Jimmy and Sam Cherenzia, or Angelo Gencarelli, to carpool. The men left for work about 6:45 and the women can still describe the whistle which called the men to work. After work, the family went “to the lot” (a large parcel of land at the lower end of Pond Street — on the left — before the memorial) to work in the garden which fed them both summer and winter. The produce was boiled, canned and “put up.” The sisters also remember the dust on the men’s clothing and the shoes which had to be left outside each night.

All over town similar neighborhoods existed. The music and the lunches may have differed but the experiences were similar. In the mid-twenties, “Oatmeal Alley” (Benefit Street between Cross and

School) was the home of the Scots who generally settled from Granite to the other side of John and prided themselves on the education they gave their children. The Irish settled along Route 1 from the Babcock-Smith House to Quarry Hill School (presently Rite-Aid) and then a mixed neighborhood existed to Wells Street. John Street was settled from the top down with Italians and Scots. Many in these neighborhoods were Catholics and the women walked from Wells Street all the way to the



Smith Granite Company 6th hole, looking north, c 1920
L to R: Santo Sposato, ?, James and Sam Cherenzia

old Immaculate Conception Church (now the Chorus of Westerly Hall). Eight hundred men poured out of the Smith and New England quarries and headed home to these neighborhoods and to their families who helped make Westerly what it is today.

As told to Betty-Jo Cugini by Marian (Sposato) Santaniello, Felice (Sposato) Scialabba, Susie (Sposato) Greene, and Irene (Sposato) Gaccione over coffee at the family homestead on Pond Street



Lillian Cugini Falcone, daughter of stonemason Dan Cugini, in her backyard with clothesline in the background.



Angelo Gencarelli in the Smith Granite Company East Quarry, the 6th hole where light pink granite was quarried. This piece of granite was used in the Trexler Memorial which had a finished weight of 32 tons. Angelo Gencarelli was the grandfather of Bangy (Angelo) Gencarelli, founder of Bess Eaton Doughnuts.

TODAY IN GRANITE

Many strange things can happen in Nature. The stone below sat piled on a heap of cut stones for about 90 years. The tree simply grew around the stone. Exposed to the elements for those 90 years, the stone developed a beautiful patina, making it perfect for “squares and rectangles” for facing buildings and use in stone walls and landscape architecture.

This one-of-a-kind “natural sculpture” can be seen outside United Builders Supply’s Masonry Department on Oak Street 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.



WESTERLY GRANITE



Green Hall, University of Rhode Island, Kingston, RI

Green Hall, a Georgian Revival building, recognized as the university’s icon building, is listed on the National Historic Register as part of the University’s historic quad. It was built in 1936 by the Works Progress Administration as the main library and home of the executive offices. It was built from red Westerly granite from Brand’s Oven Quarry in Dunn’s Corners. During the 2003 restoration, every mortar joint of the random split face granite façade was cleaned, ground out, pointed and sealed. Stone masons reconstructed the main exterior stairway. The decorative granite veneer boxes flanking the stairs that had been damaged by snow removal equipment were repaired.

STONE CHIPS

“Friday night he’d [Myllymaki’s father working in New London] take his toolbox home. A taxicab driver stopped to give him a ride. [His tool chest was on the sidewalk] Taxicab driver says, ‘Well, I’m a younger fellow, I’ll put them in the car.’ My father said it didn’t even move off the sidewalk. Couldn’t even lift it up. You realize that’s all solid iron!”

Carl Myllymaki (b.1918) interviewed in 1984.

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

Quarry Hill School

PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Francis, John	Gaccione, Michele	Gavitt, Capt. Sylvester
Francis, William	Gallager, Philip	Gavitt, Henry
Francis, Thomas	Gallagher, Phillip, Jr.	Gavitt, John
Fraquella, A.	Galli, John	Gavitt, John R.
Fraquelli, Arthur	Galli, Lodorico.	Gavitt, John Jr.
Fraquelli, John	Gallow, William	Gavitt, John Sr.
Fraser, Alexander	Gallup, George	Gavitt, Joseph
Fraser, Charles	Gambelli, G.	Gavitt, Oliver P.
Frazer, Joseph	Gardiner, Aveldo	Gavitt, William W.
Frazier, Charles	Gardiner, J. Edwin	Geaison, Daniel
Frazier, Walter L.	Garity, J.	Geary, Dennis
Fuller, Edward	Gattoni, Charles	



Babcock-Smith
House Museum

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