

BUILT FROM STONE

THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME
33 of 52

CROSSES: MASTERPIECES AND SYMBOLS OF FAITH

The use of Latin and Celtic crosses as cemetery monuments has spanned centuries. A drive through any of our local cemeteries will easily highlight crosses of both designs and pay tribute to the excellent artistic craftsmanship demonstrated by area granite carvers.

Celtic crosses are composed of a cross, with a ring that travels completely around the cross intersection. The beauty of a Celtic cross lies in the intricate carvings which usually cover the majority of the cross. These carvings might show important Biblical scenes, or highlight elements of Celtic design and art. It is these designs that demonstrate great stone-carving skill.

Some stonecutters specialized in the carving of crosses. Such was the case with the relatively new firm of Coduri & Marzoli. During just the three year period from 1908-1910 they carved five Celtic crosses as subcontractors of the well-established Smith Granite Company.

Almost all of the local crosses, both Latin and Celtic, are one-sided with any decorative carving appearing on the front face only.

One exception is the nearly ten-foot tall William Ward Family Celtic cross in River Bend Cemetery. In addition to the above-normal height, the family name and engraved panels exist on both faces of the monument. The faces are different so that either could be considered the monument's "front."



The Neidel cross in River Bend Cemetery demonstrates exceptional carving craftsmanship and detail (described below).

John B. Coduri

The Ward cross panels have a combination of design elements, some intertwined with snake-like figures.

The Neidel Celtic cross, a short distance south of the Ward cross, is quite different in that its designs show a number of human figures including the holy mother and child, the twelve apostles, and symbols of the four evangelists.

While most traditional Latin cross monuments are simple in their design, occasionally the cross face is adorned with a flower or other natural element. Most Latin crosses also have a "hammered" or smooth finish. The Orville Barber monument, however, adjacent to the Ward Celtic cross, is a wonderful example of a cross with a "rock-faced" finish.

No matter what cross the mourners chose, it was a beautiful symbol of their Christian faith.

John B. Coduri
Ellen L. Madison



The Orville Barber rock-faced Latin cross in River Bend Cemetery.

John B. Coduri



Detail of the Ward Cross: Note that each rosette is different and the scale pattern on each snake is unique.

John B. Coduri



The Ward Monument in River Bend Cemetery is a two-sided Celtic cross carved at the Joseph Coduri Granite Company.

John B. Coduri

TODAY IN GRANITE

One generation's discards are another generation's treasure. This "grout" pile was created over 80 years ago at a quarry on United Builders Supply Co., Inc. property in Westerly that was famous for its pink and red granites. When these blocks were first cut, mostly by hand and some black powder, they were considered unsuitable for monuments — the main use for granite during that era. To get at the large blocks of granite needed for monument work, several tons of stone had to be removed. This "grout" became mountains of granite that would choke a quarry operation. At that time, there was no machinery available to fabricate veneer stone or gravel, so they just accumulated. United Builders Supply, Co. Inc. uses today's technology to turn this "grout" into full bed veneer and "Thin Stone," which is cut to approximately 1" thick and applied to foundations and elsewhere to allow for "Real" stone applications where no stone has gone before.



PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

McNelly, Frank	Mellow, W. J.	Mitchell, David
McSweeney, William	Mellow, W. John	Mitchell, Davis
McVay, Charles (McVey)	Melloy, Charles	Mitchell, George
McVeigh, Charles	Melville, Charles	Mitchell, John
McVeigh, Michael	Melville, William	Mitchell, Richard
Meallon, John	Merandi, James	Mitchell, William N.
Mearns, Robert	Michie, Gordon	Mitchell, William N., Jr.
Mearns, Robert Jr.	Milby, John	Molinari, G.
Meda, Etori	Miller, Robert	Molinari, John
Medlin, John	Miner, Robert J.	Monaghan, W.
Mellow, John	Miner, W. H.	Money, Charles
	Mitchell, Alexander	Money, Clarence E.

WESTERLY GRANITE

The central section of the Neidel cross (1939) at River Bend Cemetery is rich in symbolism. The holy mother and child with accompanying angels are featured in the very center. Surrounding them are symbols for the four evangelists. Matthew (top) is represented by the eagle; Mark (left) by the winged lion; Luke (right) by the winged bull; and John (bottom) by the angel. The model for this cross was done by Julius C. Loester of New York City and the Neidel cross was cut by Fraquelli and Brusa Co. of Westerly as shown on a promotional blotter.



John B. Coduri

A nearly-identical Apostolic Memorial Celtic cross was done for Mrs. Dennis O'Brien, a resident of Watch Hill and New York City, and is located in Mt. Pleasant, New York. The stone for that cross was quarried at Sullivan Granite Company and was taken in a four-ton block from a vein of blue-white granite. George Stenhouse, of Fraquelli and Brusa, did the preliminary cutting of the cross and Nicholas Visgilio did the scrolled trimmings. Angelo Buzzi spent over two months carving the figures and other fine details and considered it one of his best works.

STONE CHIPS

On his father as a young man learning to be a carver: "You're supposed to make it like the plaster. You don't change. You don't have that license. ... He [Angelo Buzzi] was like 15 or 16 making a statue, in the little place in Switzerland and he broke the statue in the body somewhere. And he was afraid, afraid the boss would fire him... so he smoothed off the dent that he made. Then he noticed that the model didn't correspond with his work. So what he did, he fixed the model. He chipped that off in the body area and then blended it with his hand. So when the fellow came in, the sculptor, to verify the finished product, he said 'It looks pretty good, but there's something different about it. I don't know what, something different. Can't put my finger on it.' After the gentleman leaves, the boss comes over and took a look at the model and the finished piece. He said, 'I know what you did' and he kicked him right in the seat of the pants, quite hard. 'Don't ever do that.' He said, 'You should have said, "Look, it broke," and then you ask the sculptor how you correct it.'"

Harold Buzzi (b.1930) in an interview in 1985

YOUR PART IN HISTORY

Share your stories, photos and artifacts. Earlier volumes of "Built From Stone" are now on the museum's website; www.babcocksmithhouse.org.

Please call us at 401-377-8490 or 401-322-0452 or e-mail us at builtinstone@gmail.com.

COMING NEXT WEEK

The Joseph Coduri Granite Company



Babcock-Smith
House Museum

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thewesterlysun.com

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Supply Co. Inc.
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LUMBERYARDS