

# BUILT FROM STONE

## THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME  
36 of 52

### SMALL QUARRIES — BITS AND PIECES

We've all seen them—those heaps of quarried stones signifying an abandoned quarry—and, for a fleeting moment, we may wonder what the history is.

I wondered about Brand's Oven Quarry, off South Woody Hill Road, which I had frequently explored as a child. Aunt Eloise shuddered as we children shimmied out on the poles which still extended over the hole in the 1950's. Still quite visible are a shaped mound of earth, which I believe may once have supported the engine and tracks, the remnants of a huge chimney which was the forge, and a stone wall about ten feet high built to support a road.

Many people have worked to contribute pieces to the puzzle.

Dwight Brown found a reference in the April 1908 issue of *Granite, Marble and Bronze*: "Niantic, R.I.-Boston capitalists have started the granite business, under the name of The Rhode Island Redstone Co. It is planned to operate a quarry, with building stone a specialty, at Brand's Oven in the Woody Hill section of Niantic, which is within the boundary of the town of Westerly. The required machinery has arrived."

Florence Madison, my 92 year old mother, told me that the quarry was subsequently abandoned, and then reopened in the late 1930's under the aegis of George W. Bishop. Two quarrymen from Stonington, Maine, Joel and Arnold Carver, operated the quarry. Red granite was taken out to build Green Hall (1937) at URI and the base of the Providence County Courthouse (now Supreme Court *et al* on 250 Benefit Street) built in the early 30's (dates vary).

Brad Benson studied business directories from the 1930's but could

find nothing.

Tom Dinwoodie, a neighbor, told me that his grandfather, James Ernest "Ernie" Dinwoodie, had been the last engineer for the steam crane there, but had left when a strike occurred and never went back.

My 1895 map of Westerly shows the nearby Archie Fletcher Quarry and fourteen other named quarries or companies, some well-known, but some as elusive as Brand's Oven.

On the other hand, sometimes we know a smidgeon of history, but the location of the quarry is unknown. My great-grandfather Richard Opie owned a quarry which we believed was off Chase Hill, but weren't sure. In some legal papers, I found that the land was leased from Charles H. Burdick. Dwight Brown sent me a copy of that same 1895 map, but for Hopkinton, and, sure enough, there was a quarry belonging to Burdick, right along the river.

Ellen L. Madison

Please help us. If you have any history of small quarries, please let us know so that we can document that history before the quarry falls into the sad state of the ones I have mentioned.



Richard Opie (1849-1925), born in Penryn, Cornwall, England, was a stonecutter and quarryman. In 1891, he, along with other Westerly firms such as Joseph Newall & Co., Dalbeattie, and New England Granite Works, were advertising in *Monumental News*, a Chicago publication.

Ellen L. Madison



Richard Opie's quarry in 1894, probably on the site of the Charles Burdick quarry off Chase Hill Road, Hopkinton.

Ellen L. Madison

Business card of Richard Opie. Opie, with an office on 40 School Street, worked both as an independent contractor and as a partner. Even this small quarry operator/stonecutter did business under the name of Opie and Van Gunden (1891-1893) with an office in Philadelphia and also under the name Opie and Seccombe (1895) with an office in Sheldon, CT.



Ellen L. Madison

### TODAY IN GRANITE

Granite is a forever product. When first quarried and finished the granite pictured here was used as specialized curbing for streets. Over time, streets are moved or rebuilt and the old granite curbing, which was hand cut, is replaced by machined uniform granite curbing. The old granite now takes on a new life and can be used in many applications including steps, landings, garden benches, and yes, as curbing again for driveways to get that "authentic antique" look. The used granite can also be cut on modern splitters to become granite veneer for building and walls. The many colors and aged patina the granite acquires after years of exposure to weather gives this "Antique Granite Veneer" a look that can be found nowhere else. United Builders Supply Co., Inc. offers a large selection of used "antique" granite, from simple steps to complete multi piece border details with many components and "Antique Granite Veneer".



### PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Nster, Oatrick	O'Donnell, Edward	Opie, Phillip
O'Briens, John	O'Donnell, John	Opie, Richard
O'Connell, Louis	Ogston, William	Oppy, Charles
O'Connell, D.	O'Keefe, W.	Oppy, William
O'Connell, Daniel	O'Leary, Timothy	Osborne, Marmaducke
O'Connell, John B.	Olgeati, Antoni	Osborn, M. H.
O'Connor, Michael	Olgeati, Louis	O'Sullivan, Morris
O'Connell, Thomas	Olgeatti, John	O'Tool, James
O'Connell, James	Oliver, William	Owens, Joseph
O'Connell, Jerome R.	O'Neil, John	Owens, Thomas
O'Connell, John D.	Opie, James	Paladino, David
O'Connell, Patrick	Opie, John	

### HISTORY

#### Dinwoodies in the News

*Narragansett Weekly* Dec. 28, 1893: SHOOTING AT NIANTIC. Officers Gavitt and West, who went to Niantic yesterday to bring William Corris before Judge Whipple, returned to Westerly empty-handed. They found the victim of John Dinwoodie's shotgun was unable to be moved, so they placed him in the charge of two deputies until such a time as his physical condition would permit his appearance before Judge Whipple.

Dinwoodie is a boss in the employ of David McG. Newall, and the other day was obliged to discharge Corris, because of lack of work. The latter took heart and also took considerable liquor. These two set him in a frenzy, which was all directed against Dinwoodie. He was warned three times to keep away from the latter's house, after he had smashed the windows and threatened people with carving knives, and only then did Dinwoodie shoot. Corris will recover and then must appear on a charge of threatening to take Dinwoodie's life.

*Narragansett Weekly* August 28, 1896. The little two year old child [David Dinwoodie] of John Dinwoodie, foreman at Newall's Quarry, who fell into a kettle of boiling soup on Sunday, is in critical condition, and is not expected to live. The child continues to have convulsions, and the flesh is in a terrible condition. The sympathy of the people at Niantic, where the family resides, is extended to both the child and parents.

Niantic is now Bradford. The child lived.

Picture and information was supplied by Betty Jean Gavitt Page and Kathleen Gavitt Walton, great-granddaughters of John Dinwoodie.



John Dinwoodie, Sr., superintendent of both Newall and Sullivan Quarries, shot a quarry employee in self defense.

### STONE CHIPS

"I can see the quarry now. I can see the sloping granite down there and there used to be a place, one of the bluffs, they used to call 'Chain Rock.' And all the kids, boy, if they didn't jump off that they were chicken. So I went up there and looked down off it one day. And I looked down. 'I'm chicken. I'm not going to jump off this bugger.' Some of the guys used to do one and half back gainers and everything. Crazy. Then there were women down there. The fellas used to swim in the nude. Women artists down there takin' pictures, drawin' pictures and drawin' pictures of the boys swimmin' in the quarry."

Tony Morris in an interview in 1984 or 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](http://www.babcocksmithhouse.org).

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

The Richards Mausoleum: Gothic in Granite



Babcock-Smith  
House Museum

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thewesterlysun.com

United Builders  
Supply Co. Inc.  
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