

# BUILT FROM STONE

## THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME  
50 of 52

### A MAN FOR ALL SEASON

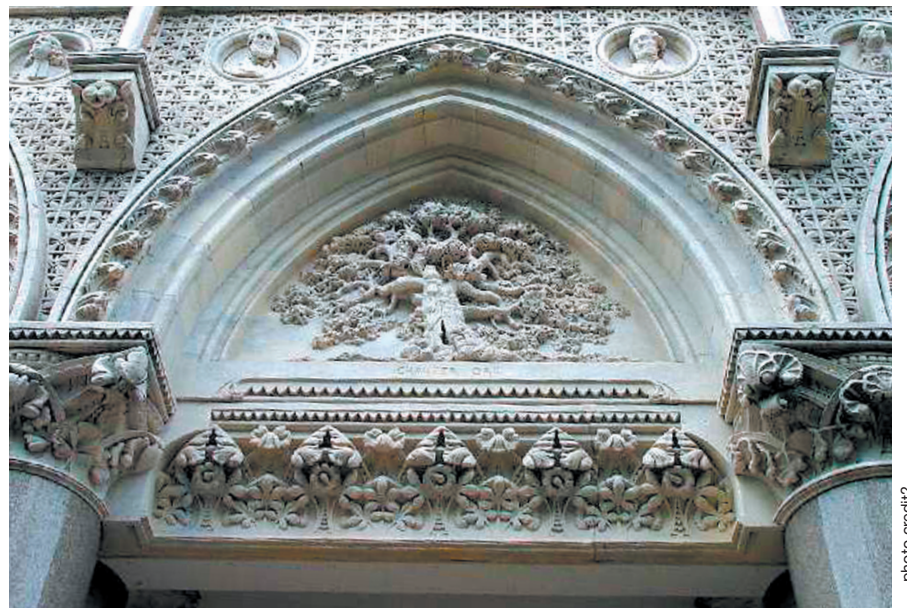
James G. Batterson was a man of many talents and diverse interests. From insurance companies to construction, from California to Rhode Island, from libraries to mummies, James Batterson was involved. Westerly granite helped make him the man he was.

Based in Hartford, CT, his company, the New England Granite Works, was a giant in the local granite industry. This company was unusual in that it excelled in both major building projects and elaborate monument work.

Because Batterson, a man with political connections, was a leading supplier of granite and other construction stone, President Abraham Lincoln appointed him building contractor for the Congressional Library building in Washington D.C. Batterson also constructed the Masonic Temple in New York City and the Connecticut State Capitol in Hartford.

Many of the largest Civil War monuments were designed and built by Batterson, including Antietam Soldier carved from Westerly granite. The massive Soldiers National Monument at Gettysburg Cemetery is also made from Westerly granite and has marble statues. He erected the bronze statue of Alexander Hamilton in Central Park, New York; the Thayer Monument at West Point, New York; the Texas Revolutionary Monument in Galveston; and the Hallock Monument at San Francisco.

In addition to his work in the granite industry, he was a forerunner in the development of insurance companies in the United States. While in England, he was so impressed with the record and success of the Railway Passenger Assurance Company, that he resolved to gather a group of progressive men to launch a similar



Above: Detail of the Charter Oak on the Connecticut Capitol, Hartford, CT

Below: James Batterson (1823-1901) owner of New England Granite Works

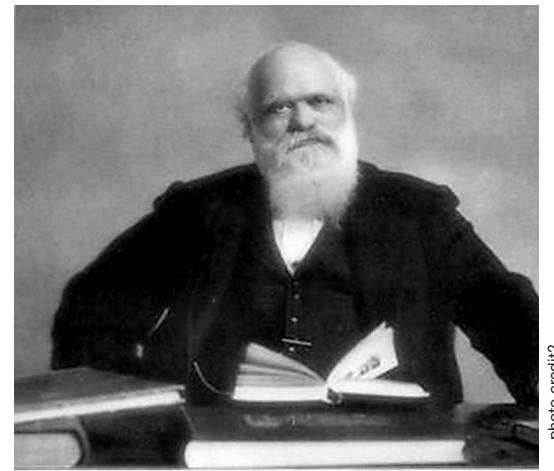
venture in the United States. Thus the Travelers Insurance Company was born and he remained in charge until his death in 1901. The Travelers Insurance Building is an outstanding example of the use of Westerly granite in constructing buildings.

As a champion for the arts, he joined forces with Elizabeth Colt to make the Wadsworth Atheneum, a free public art museum. On October 16, 1880, he was honored at the Athenaeum by ex-President Ulysses S.

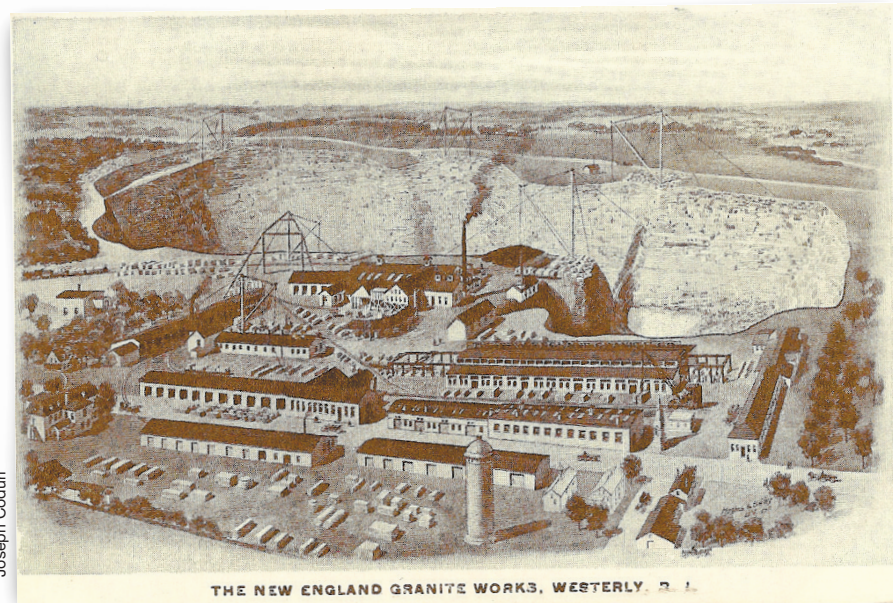
Grant for his contributions to historic preservation. Batterson also traveled to Italy to find talented sculptors to work on his designs for bronze and stone sculptures for monuments.

During his several years in Egypt he developed an interest in Egyptology and in his time passed for such an authority in that field that he became honorary secretary of the Egyptian Exploration Fund. Surely James Batterson was a man for all seasons.

Linda Smith Chaffee



*J. G. Batterson*



Postcard of the New England Granite Works.

### TODAY IN GRANITE



### WESTERLY GRANITE



The Cugini home on Spruce Street has unmatched stone work, inside and out. It was designed and built by Jerry and Dan Cugini along with friends and family who also had a love of quality granite and craftsmanship. Many of the houses in Westerly have walls, foundations or fireplaces (of granite, hand-cut fieldstone or marble) made by "the Cugini brothers."

#### Cugini Stone Masons

Dan and Jerry Cugini were unparalleled stonemasons/stonecutters in the first half of the twentieth century. Born in San Danoto, a small town outside Rome, they started learning the fine skills of Old World stone masonry construction at a very young age at their family-owned-and-operated quarry and stone masonry business.

Coming to the United States in 1903, the brothers practiced their craft first in New York City and then in Westerly where they became masters of cut-to-fit stone work. They excelled at the most challenging style, cutting granite for an Ashlar pattern, and were often selected as the lead layout men, working for months before anyone else was brought on site.

Ashlar is the use of a prepared or dressed stone with straight edges in an interlocking pattern. This work is seen mainly on cathedrals, churches, and municipal buildings with Gothic, Roman, Jack (flat) and segmental arches. The epitome of stone masonry, this style requires the highest level of thought and skill. Ashlar has the best interlocking pattern design and, therefore, is sought after for building.

Lisa Guerard Cugini and Betty-Jo Cugini

### STONE CHIPS

**Narragansett Weekly**, June 13, 1872: Immediately after the forced suspension of work on Masonic Temple in New York, by the New York Stonecutters' Society, a squad of men [were] sent forward from Westerly, composed of three Italians who could not talk English and three apprentices who could. As one of them, while at work, was accosted by a swaggering stranger, who in a characteristic way asked the apprentice who he was working for, he replied, for "his family, himself, and JG. Batterson," and that he had better be doing the same thing, instead of "loafing around, meddling with other people's business." The stranger proved to be the President of the New York Society.

### 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 Zerbarini Brothers: The Best of the Carvers

### PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Trevino, Wellington	Vega, F. A.
Turano, John	Vega, Joseph
Turco, Frank	Verzillo, Frank
Tuscano, Frank	Verzillo, Gaetano
Tuscano, Sam	Verzillo, Gaton
Tyle, Timothy	Verzillo, Nick
Ure, John	Villa, Constan
Utter,	Villa, Peter
Veal, William J.	Volpi, G
Vebster, George	Wagner, Erie
Vega, Alonzo	Waugelin, Erik



Babcock-Smith  
House Museum

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