

BUILT FROM STONE

THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME
40 of 52

BONNER MONUMENT COMPANY

"I learned from the best — Mr. Bonner" said Roger Shawn about Donald Bonner, owner of Bonner Monument Co. and a recent legend in the granite business. In 1996, at 83, he oversaw the installation of his last work, the URI Vietnam Memorial and closed his company, but his legacy lives on.

Although Bonner had tried several different jobs after graduating from URI, he returned to work at his father's monument business which had been founded in 1930. In 1947 he acquired the Main Street business and moved it to Route 3 in Ashaway in 1954 just after Hurricane Carol. The new location featured larger facilities, more modern granite-cutting equipment, and portable devices for lettering and cleaning in a cemetery itself.

In 1968 Bonner purchased the Newall Quarry in Bradford which had been unused since 1906; he renamed it the Blue Westerly Granite Quarry which ran until 1991.

A sales brochure mentions several of the monuments of which Bonner was most proud. One is the magnificently carved lion that long stood in Roger Williams Park, erected in memory of deceased members of Lions International. Others are a bust of Bernar (sic) MacFadden at Woodlawn Cemetery, replacement boundary markers for the Mason-Dixon Line, and a granite seal for St. John's University. Locally, Bonner had a hand in the Westerly High School sign, the

Westerly Korean Conflict Memorial, the Westerly-Pawcatuck War Memorial, and the Stonington's Fisherman's Memorial. His company cut all the granite for the Westerly Library 1992 addition and he worked tirelessly on the creation of a granite exhibit displayed from 1992-2010 at the library.

"Fancy work was our forte," he said. He had drawers of tissue patterns labeled "lovebirds" and "leaves." Many of these patterns are now treasured by Roger Shawn of Shawn Monument Co. in Bradford and the BSH Museum has many of his plaster models and rubber stencils.

In 1996, he closed his doors after methodically selling his equipment to places as varied as Quincy, Massachusetts and India.

Ellen L. Madison with information supplied by Gail Bonner, daughter of Donald Bonner



Ellen Kenyon, secretary, with the Mason-Dixon Line Marker

Donald Bonner Collection, BSH Museum



Richard Smith

The Bonner Gang: L to R Richard Coduri, Tony Morris, Richard Comolli, Marcia Thompson, Ellen Kenyon, Andy Anderson, Patsy Capizzano, Angelo Vita, Charlie Rainey, Donald Bonner.



Donald Bonner holding the cannon ball he created to replace the one stolen from the Battery B 1st RILA monument in Gettysburg.

Donald Bonner Collection, BSH Museum

TODAY IN GRANITE

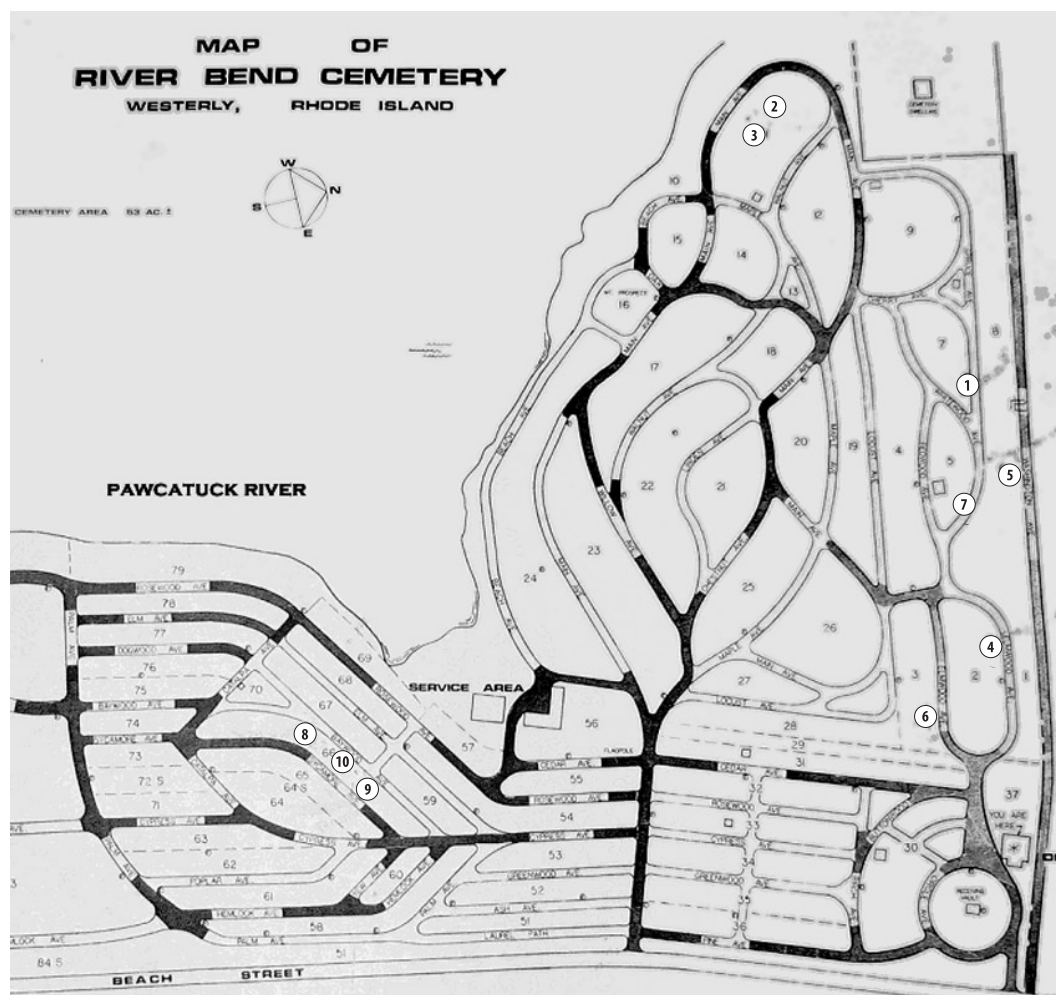
R. Florenze & Sons, Mason Contractors from East Greenwich, RI, used stones gathered on site and "Antique Granite Veneer" from United Builders Supply Co., Inc. to create this impressive foundation veneer. Antique Granite Veneer is comprised of several types of old granite curbing split into veneer size pieces. Some pieces have a "fresh" split while others have the patina that only nature and age can achieve. The blending of the different granites, the different faces and stone picked at the site along with granite lintels over the doors and windows created a look that is unique to this building. UBS has an extensive inventory of Antique Granite Veneer as well as Westerly's own pink and blue granites available in squares & rectangles and ashlar cuts. Thin Stone, a product created by cutting the face of stones down to about one inch, is also available in Westerly Pink, Blue and "Rustic." Thin Stone can be used to apply a natural stone finish to existing foundations or anywhere else stone is desired without requiring the structure needed for a full bed depth stone. The owners of United Builders Supply are pleased to once again offer for sale the granites that made Westerly famous which are the subject of these many articles.



PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Rearon, Daniel	Rhodes, Rodney	Riley, Cornelius F.
Recchia, Frank	Rhodes, William	Riley, Michael
Recchia, James	Rhodes, William H.	Rizzi, Joseph
Recchia, Joseph	Ricchi, L.	Roach, Edward
Recchia, Louse	Rich, Dan	Roach, Frank
Reid, W. H.	Richards, James	Roach, John
Reith, James	Richards, Samuel	Roach, John P.
Rendel, Sulo	Riche, David Jr.,	Roach, Patrick
Rendel, Toney	Richmond, L. D.	Roach, Robert
Resetti, S.	Riddell, James	Roache, William
Restelli, Gasper	Riley, A.	Roan, John
Rezzi, Charles	Riley, C.A.	Roan, Robert

WESTERLY GRANITE



A Garden in Stone-The Solution

1. Poppies: Newall Monument
2. Iris: Franklin Smith Monument
3. Dogwood: Isaac Smith, Sr. Monument
4. Lilies: Bicknell Monument
5. Rose: Chapman Monument
6. Lily of the Valley: Fyffe Cross
7. Thistle: Darrach Monument
8. Daffodil: Gehmlich Monument
9. Passion Flower: Stewart Cross
10. A full bouquet of roses, lilies: Comolli Monument. This monument was carved by Richard Comolli himself. He operates the Comolli Granite Company on Chase Hill Road (2010).

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 builtfromstone@gmail.com.

COMING NEXT WEEK

Less Common Types of Monuments



Babcock-Smith
House Museum

SUN PUBLISHING CO.
thewesterlysun.com

United Builders
Supply Co. Inc.
401-596-2831
unitedbuilderssupply.com

UBS
LUMBERYARDS