

BUILT FROM STONE

THE WESTERLY GRANITE STORY

VOLUME
6 of 52

NOTHING CAN TOP THESE PRODUCTS (1880-1900)

What brought the rich and the famous from as far away as California to this small town when transportation and communication were difficult? They wanted their monuments to be the best and the best monuments came from the quarries and companies of Westerly. The combination of outstanding craftsmen and granite of the highest quality was unmatched. The men who designed the monuments had an eye for proportion, pleasing design and detail, and the statue cutters carved delicate details in hard, unforgiving granite.



The angel on the McDowell monument in Laurel Hill Cemetery in Philadelphia was cut by James Pollette from a new model; she holds a delicate crown through which the sky can be seen.

Clients clamored for these lifelike statues which seemed to convey emotions. Most of the time a design would be reproduced for several clients, but occasionally a wealthy client would pay a higher fee to guarantee that the model would be destroyed after his monument was complete.

For massive size and exquisite detail, the Washington Equestrian (see photo) is an outstanding example. The statue, carved by brothers Angelo and Columbus Zerbarini, has heroic proportions of one and a half times lifesize. The statue sits on an ornate die that is carved on four sides and has multiple bases. This equestrian statue is unusual in that it is made entirely of granite; most often equestrian statues have granite bases with a bronze statue. The bulk of the horse and rider could not be supported by the thin legs of the horse so the sculptor had to make accommodations for the characteristics of the granite. A design element covered with leaves is positioned under the horse to support the weight.



One of three statues on the Sanders monument in Calvary Catholic Cemetery in Evanston, IL. Smith Granite Company created this monument in 1893 from Westerly blue granite.

James Pollette and Charles Rezzi were the statue cutters. Andrew Farrell, Joseph Fraser, Dennis Moore, and Angelo Perloti did the carving on the monument's elaborate die (not shown).

The reins, the stirrups and even the spurs were cut from granite. In fact, all the detail in the statue is so fine that even the Zerbarini brothers themselves were impressed. It is said that when the committee came from Pittsburg to approve the statue, the brothers remarked tongue in-cheek that if they were given a few more weeks the spurs would even turn.

Granite with characteristics different from those needed by the monument makers was in high demand for buildings which we will examine later.

Linda Smith Chaffee

The Washington Equestrian statue in the Statue Cutters' Shed. Notice the thin webs of granite under the legs and between the tail and the body. These were left in place to give the statue more structural integrity during shipment to Pittsburgh, PA.



Once on site the webs would be carefully cut away. The Washington Equestrian atop the carved die and multiple bases.

TODAY IN GRANITE

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.

A treasure from the past, United Builders Supply is excited to be able to offer these historic granites to the marketplace again.

Westerly Granite is again being used successfully in the region.

All masonry materials were supplied by United Builders Supply Co., Inc.



This picture shows Westerly Blue granite being used as a pool coping and infinity edge along with Westerly Pink veneer wall stone in new construction of a home in Westerly.

WHERE IN WESTERLY?



On the corner of Watch Hill Road and Ninigret Avenue, there is a lovely exedra dedicated to the memory of Ensign James Gordon Woodruff, USNR who was killed at the Battle of Midway on June 16, 1943.

STONE CHIPS

The posts around Elm Street School (now St. Pius School) were cut by hand. The steps to the East and West entrances of the school and the old Stonington Borough School are exactly the same.

GLOSSARY

Exedra: A large niche or recess with a bench or seats with a semicircular plan.

PEOPLE WHO BUILT WESTERLY DOCUMENTED GRANITE WORKERS

Bergonzi, Lugi
Berkley, Micheal
Berkley, Thomas
Bernasconi, Ambrogio
Bernasconi, Abrose
Bernasconi, Arthur
Bernasconi, Augusto
Bernasconi, Frank
Bernasconi, Jacoe
Bernasconi, Joseph
Bewzie, James
Bezzie, Gerome
Bianchi, G.

Bianchi, Frank
Bianchi, Charles
Bianchi, John
Bianchi, Louis
Bishop, James H.
Bishop, Thomas J.
Bisset, Alexander
Bisset, Alexander, Jr.
Biswurm, John V.
Bizzi, Brondino
Black, Theogore E.
Blake, Charles
Blake, Charles G.

YOUR PART IN HISTORY

Bring your granite worker's biographical information to be recorded, shared and pictures scanned to the Open House at the Babcock-Smith House Museum on Saturday, May 29 from 2:00 pm – 5:00 pm.

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

COMING NEXT WEEK

Upgrading the facilities to impress the clients. (1880-1900)



Babcock-Smith
House Museum

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