Westerly’s granite was ideal; its fine grain, uniform color, strength and easy workability were the characteristics needed for the finest monuments. As the market moved to more elaborate monuments, the granite companies recruited talented stonecutters from Scotland, Ireland, Italy, Finland, and the United States. These highly-skilled stonecutters needed to produce a finely finished surface on the stone, cut letters, and carve moldings and decorative designs. As the trade developed, men began to specialize. Specific skills were needed by letter cutters; different skills were needed by carvers. A hierarchy developed—apprentices, journeymen, letter cutters, carvers, statue cutters. The further up the hierarchy, the greater the prestige and the greater the hourly wage.

In 1880, with the raw material available, the craftsmen in place, and the product in demand, the industry was poised to become nationally famous.

The wall around the Babcock-Smith House is an example of walls done during the transitional period. A stone look reveals a hitching post near the wooden gate. Everyone would want to be a part of this boom. Small companies would spring up. Quarries would open and close, leaving slabs of rock for hikers to find today in the middle of the woods. Men would flock to Westerly for employment.

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A happy convergence of factors led to the founding of the Babcock-Smith House Museum and The Westerly Granite Company, featuring two sculptors in their studio. The mural of the sculptors’ studio at the Smith House is under the direction of art teacher Linda Smith Chaffee. A close look reveals a hitching post near the wooden gate.

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.

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