

Back When . . . *The Wallace Quarry shipped stone to many places*

By Ellen Millard. Reprinted without permission from *The Light* October 2006

Songs are written expressing the wish to take that "sentimental journey" to the sights and sounds of home. The late Francis Grant, noted Wallace historian, tells of a man from Pictou - Roderick McLean - who had been a ship's carpenter in Wallace. He went west at the time of the Gold Rush and eventually settled in San Francisco, California.

He wrote to friends at home that when he felt lonely he would walk back and forth in front of the Justice Building in San Francisco. He would "meditate" on the fact that the stone on the building front had come from the Wallace Quarry near where he had worked in his homeland! That stone had been carried to New York, cut to the required dimension, then loaded on ships to sail around Cape Horn to San Francisco.

Many pretentious structures on the North American continent have been built with stone from the Wallace Quarry. Stanley Flinn's collection of photos and information about the quarry shows a long list of buildings that have used Wallace stone. The buildings are in Montreal, New York City and many other Canadian and American cities.

The Parliament building in Ottawa, the Confederation and Legislature buildings in Charlottetown and also the Legislature building in Halifax were constructed with Wallace stone. The quarry was kept busy for three years providing stone for the restoration and reconstruction of Fort Louisburg in Cape Breton Island during the 1970s. The ferry terminals for the Prince Edward Island ferries also used the stone.

Closer to home, schools in Truro, Amherst and Wallace have quarry stone as does the doctors' office in Tatamagouche.

The beautiful stone as well enhances several Maritime university campuses: the University of New Brunswick, Dalhousie and Mount Allison. For the Sackville, NB, College, a mix of red stone was used with Wallace stone to give, in Mr. Flynn's opinion, "the best stone I have ever seen".

Francis Grant has documented the story of the accidental discovery of the fine gray and blue stone in his writing, "The Wallace Village Freestone Quarry." He recounts that in 1863, William MacNab, when trying to erect a fence around a field he had bought from Joshua Huestis, found that he could only drive the posts about 10 inches into the ground before striking solid rock. Stone

was discovered in six-, seven- and eight-inch layers and markets were soon found in Charlottetown for it to be used in sidewalks. Beds of stone were found from five to 20 feet deep.

The stone was hauled to the water's edge by two-wheel carts, swung on scows and taken to schooners to be sold in Halifax, Boston and PEI. The first schooner to do this was "The Wallace," owned and operated by James Drysdale.

After its formation, the quarry was operated under many names and by many different owners. Names in the first years included The Huestis Greystone Co., Battye Co. and G.P Sherwood

Light double-track railway was laid from the top of the hill to the end of Quarry Wharf. Trolleys were pulled by a giant winch and barriers were dropped across the two streets to stop regular traffic when stone was being loaded on ships.

When P Lyall and Sons bought the quarry, modern machinery (a small steam locomotive) replaced the horse-drawn carts, a sawmill was built and an overhead electric crane installed. Arthur McCann was in charge of the big engine that ran the saws and he took great pride in keeping it shining.

In his history Mr. Grant states that the flywheel must have been at least eight or nine feet in diameter and steam produced must have generated tremendous energy to drive five gang saws. They swung back and forth over the stone; sand and water were supplied continually with a great deal of noise. Mr. Lyall owned quarries in several other places so had built the workshop using the same plans as his other properties.

The quarry was next managed by his son William and finally passed on to daughter Mrs. Dubue and other members of the family. The quarry boom lasted until the early 1930s. Today Stan Flynn manages the quarry and receives orders occasionally for the formed stone for repairs and for new work. However, the workshop is no longer used and the orders are filled by workers in his trucking company. He remembers that at one time more than 100 men would be employed in the six- to seven-month season when the quarry would be working at its peak. Some workers came from as far away as New Brunswick and lived in the two large houses built on company land to provide boarding houses.

Famous stone cutters included Charlie MacCoul, Art Dewar and Stan Flynn's uncle, Roy. Often seven or eight ships would be waiting to be loaded in the harbour as Wallace Quarry stone came to be known by builders of fine architecture all over North America.



Looking up the hill from where Joshua's house once stood. This street is the location of the original tramway track that ferried stone from the quarry at the top of the hill, to the wharf. The picture below is from the same point, but looking down the hill.

