

THE MOUNT AIRY GRANITE INDUSTRY

The quarrying of Mount Airy Granite as a commercial venture dates back to a short time after the coming of the railroad to Mount Airy, which was in June of 1888. Since that time the quarry has been operated continuously and has enjoyed a steady growth. The working surface of the quarry has been greatly enlarged by stripping off the overburden of dirt and decayed stone. At the same time new machinery and buildings have been added to the equipment until today the quarry is recognized as the best equipped in this country.

The original quarry was composed of about twenty-five acres of exposed granite but this has been increased until at present there are over seventy-five acres of granite exposed. There are two very large cutting sheds capable of serving three hundred granite cutters. These cutting sheds are equipped with four electric overhead cranes, three polishing machines, three granite cutting lathes, two very large carborundum saws, two complete sand-blast installations, forty-five surfacing machines and other modern cutting equipment.

The power plant is composed of five boilers totaling a horse power of nearly one thousand. There are five large air compressors with a total capacity of ten thousand five hundred feet of air per minute which furnish compressed air all over the quarry and in the cutting sheds. Practically all of the large machinery is driven by electricity; there being between thirty-five and forty electric motors in operation. The smaller granite working tools are driven by compressed air. Practically all of the repair work and tool sharpening is taken care of in the companies' own machine and blacksmith shops. Eleven aerial cableways, several miles of railroad sidings, a locomotive, seventeen railway cars, three locomotive cranes, a crawler crane and various other lesser equipment are ample to take care of handling the granite on the quarry and transporting it to the cutting sheds.

Mount Airy Granite is a very light gray granite, almost white, and of medium texture. The feldspar is nearly white, the quartz a blue gray and the mica is black, which being evenly distributed throughout the entire mass combine to make a very beautiful granite. Mount Airy Granite is used for all the purposes where granite can be applied, and has been shipped all over the Country, even into New England and Cuba. The principal products of the industry at Mount Airy are cut stone for monuments, mausoleums, buildings of all kinds & bridge; curbing and paving blocks for street work; rubble for residences and churches; and crushed stone. In addition to the above products, a great volume of the granite is quarried and shipped in the rough to be cut and finished at other points.

The Mount Airy Granite industry gives employment to something like seven hundred men the year around. These men are paid a total of nearly one million dollars per year in wages. The great majority of the men own their own homes in or near Mount Airy and live here the year round as they are assured of steady employment. A great many Surry county boys and men have been given the opportunity to learn the stone cutter's trade and can command wages of from eight to ten dollars per day. Needless to say the granite industry has to a considerable extent helped in the building up of prosperity in Mount Airy and Surry County.