

INTRODUCTION

The story of American building and architecture beginning with the first daub and wattle dwellings at Jamestown to the modern, soaring skyscraper is one of variety, ingenuity and the constant search for improvement. Yet, despite the era, the goal has remained unchanged--- to create a structure that will best fulfill its intended purpose in both form and function.

The availability and abundance of building material has always been one of the determining factors for permanent settlement and development of a region. Stone outcroppings, abundant woodland, clay pits for the manufacture of bricks, and iron ore deposits were treasured for building purposes. With building material close at hand, carpenters, masons and metal workers could ply their skills building hamlets, towns and cities. Fortunately, America was blessed with natural resources, and among these was brownstone. Indeed, as a building material brownstone became so popular in the latter half of the 19th Century that these years are sometimes referred to as the Brownstone Era of the Victorian Age.

Post Civil War years saw a boom in urban development and expansion, and the budding field of architecture was producing men to meet those needs. The atelier of Richard Morris Hunt was becoming influential and the work of Henry Hobson Richardson, Louis Sullivan and Frank Furness dominated the cities in which they practiced their craft while their influence spread throughout the country becoming a major source of inspiration for local architects. Whether the structure was Greek Revival, Romanesque, Eclectic, Neo or Collegiate Gothic, Beaux Arts, Tudor, etc., one thing was evident --- brownstone filled the need for all. No matter if it performed the

mundane role of foundation or bridge abutment or the glamorous part of primary building stone or ornately carved trim, it was a highly prized material.

The northern Appalachian Mountain range is laced with outcroppings of brownstone which resulted in the opening of many quarries. Local inhabitants and builders immediately took advantage of the material. One of the earliest brownstone quarries to be worked in America was located in Portland, Connecticut, which provided stone as early as the mid 17th Century. Quarries at Longmeadow, Massachusetts; Medina, New York; Newark, New Jersey and others contributed vast quantities of brownstone to cities and towns along the East coast and beyond. In the mid 1800's there were nine brownstone quarries operating simultaneously from Cornwall, Pennsylvania, to Goldsboro on the Susquehanna River, a distance of approximately forty miles. However, the premiere quarry among these was located approximately two miles south of the borough of Hummelstown in Dauphin County. This is the story of that industrial endeavor and its remarkable contribution to the American building arts.

