

# **“The Granites of Minnesota”**

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“The granites of Minnesota are adapted to a wide range of architectural uses. That most employed is from St. Cloud (No. 1); it is of a natural gray color, of rather fine, inconspicuously granular texture, and has a resisting strength of over 25,000 pounds per square inch. It resists fire and the sudden cooling produced by cold water thrown upon it, better than the more quartzose, and more coarsely granular rocks quarried at East St. Cloud and Watab. The other varieties, however are more showy in construction, on account of their lighter color as well as their more close crystalline texture. Some of them will take and preserve a better polish, particularly Nos. 6 and 7, and are to be preferred for that reason for fine work, such as monuments or tablets, and for all inside trimmings. The syenite from Beaver Bay has a uniformly brownish red color and fine grain, and when polished is very beautiful.

“These crystalline rocks have been used in some of the principal buildings in St. Paul and Minneapolis for trimmings, and have been sent for the same purpose to several other cities, particularly to Milwaukee, Chicago and Des Moines. At Sauk Rapids the fine gray sienite (No. 1) is made into monuments. Stone from the Sauk Rapids quarries was used in the trimmings of the state capitol at Des Moines, and constitutes the entire front wall of the block of Nichols & Dean, at St. Paul. It is that used for paving at Minneapolis and St. Paul. The trimmings of the U. S. custom house and post-office at St. Paul were taken from the East St. Cloud quarries, and embrace all the principal varieties there found, *i.e.*, Nos. 1, 6 and 7. Much of the stone put into the bridge over the Missouri river at Bismarck for the Northern Pacific railroad, came from East St. Cloud, but at a point further southeast than the quarries of Breen & Young, and consists of another variety (No. 9) of syenite. This rock seems to have stood the physical tests to which Minnesota building stones have been submitted less successfully than the other crystalline rocks. This, however, may be due in some measure to the fact that in reducing a block for a test to the required dimensions with a hammer and chisel, it is more likely to be checked and weakened if coarsely crystalline, as this rock is, than if it be fine-grained; and some of the tests may have been influenced by such imperfection in the samples. Still, the greatest care possible was taken to avoid any unfavorable results from such a cause.

“The gabbro of Rice’s Point, Duluth, has been employed in a few buildings at Duluth, both as cut trimmings and for rough walls. It has also been used for monuments and for bases, to which it is especially adapted, being cut under the chisel and polished more easily than any of the crystalline rocks that contain quartz. The same kind of rock at Taylor’s Falls has been but little employed for any purpose, though the rock there is favorably situated both for working and for transportation.

“The labradorite rock (No. 8) has a lavender-blue or blueish (sic) gray color, and is vitreous and subtranslucent in thin sheets. It does not have the opalescence which distinguishes the labradorite from the typical locality and from Lewis county, New York, but it has a compact, perfectly crystalline texture, with crystals as large as ½ or ¾ inch across. In some of the ‘greenstone’ at Beaver Bay are perfect crystals over 2 inches in diameter, distributed porphyritically in the mass, but this structure is very rare. This beautiful rock, when suitably handled, will constitute a valuable material for ornamental slabs and columns, and probably also for china ware. Titantic acid, which is sometimes found in this rock, even in large quantities, is found in nearly all porcelain clays, at least in those of New Jersey, and suggests not only the possible origin of the kaolinic clays used for earthenware, but also the adaptability of the undecayed rock of the same uses.”

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We do not have the Minnesota state stone quarry section online yet, but you can find photographs and information on some of Minnesota’s old quarries at the following link.  
Peggy B. Perazzo, July 2013

Quarry Park and Nature Preserve

<http://www.co.stearns.mn.us/Recreation/CountyParks/QuarryParkandNaturePreserve>