

“The Ohio Freestone District”

In *Stone, An Illustrated Magazine*, Vol. 5, No. 2
July 1892, pp. 191-196

This article, which begins on the next page,
is presented on the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site.

<http://quarriesandbeyond.org/>

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September 2013

THE OHIO FREESTONE DISTRICT.



UNDERLYING the hills of Southern Ohio, from a point less than one hundred miles east of Cincinnati to the famous Scioto Valley, and extending inland some twenty or thirty miles, are almost inexhaustible beds of freestone, some of which have been worked for half a century and others only opened since the introduction of railroads along the Ohio, affording other transportation facilities than the river. The largest and most important of the freestone quarries is that of the Buena Vista Freestone Co., at Buena Vista, a pretty little village lying between Portsmouth and Cincinnati. This company is more often referred to as the "Caden Company" in contradistinction to the Buena Vista Excelsior Freestone Works, operated by other parties. The members of the Caden family date their connection with the freestone interests of Buena Vista, back to the '50's and have distributed the responsibilities of caring for the many details connected therewith in such a manner as to insure absolute harmony and greatest concentration of forces. They maintain a general store, over which their offices are located, own a fleet of boats for transporting stone down the river; have their own stone mill with eight gangs of saws, and control 10,000 acres of timber and stone land, the development of which affords employment to a sufficient number of persons to people the better part of the village of Buena Vista as well as the valley up which the quarries are located. As the best stone is found four miles up this valley they have constructed a tram railway which is a model of its kind, both in the manner of its construction, the system of conducting it and in the maintenance and care it receives.

Starting from the stone saw mills on the bank of the Ohio river this tramway traverses the extensive stone-yards of the prosperous concern and turns abruptly to the right until the high banks of Twin Creek are reached, which it follows for about a mile along a road bed cut in the side of the high hills, which engineering feat, as those encountered further along this unique railway, was accomplished, unaided, by one of the Cadens. The cars are drawn by mules, who find an easy grade for most of the distance, the steeper



VIEW IN QUARRY OF BUENA VISTA FREESTONE COMPANY.

“View in Quarry of Buena Vista Freestone Company”

hills having a gravity incline, one of which is illustrated at the opening of this article. Relay stations are located every half mile and so perfect is the system of conducting this road that an empty tram-car going toward the quarry is seldom delayed by a car going down. Generally speaking, an "empty" will take the switch at a relay station just in time to exchange mules with the driver of the loaded car who travels only between the two stations relieving the driver of a loaded car at one end and taking back an "empty." So thoroughly has this custom become fastened upon Mr. Mule that in event of its becoming necessary to essay another half mile of travel unrelieved by a down traveler, the proverbial stubbornness of the animal asserts itself and while the lash is being applied vigorously to his back he



CADEN'S MILL.

he starts off, showing, however, his dissatisfaction with every step he takes. These stations are substantial structures and afford ample protection to man and beast from the weather. The Cadens cut their own timber and have their own saw mill and employ carpenters capable of building any sort of a structure, including bridges, stations and dwelling houses for the workmen. The valley is dotted with these cozy habitations for laboring men and each house is numbered so that it is readily designated in any lease, rent receipt or order for repairs.

The company gets out its own ties and keeps men constantly employed in making repairs along the line, keeping in mind the old saw that "a stitch in time saves nine." A pleasant journey of half an hour brings us to the quarries at present being worked which are located on the eastern slope of a hill. Very little stripping is required until the hill has been penetrated

calmly meditates on the unreasonable demands of man who formulated customs and laws only to destroy them at unreasonable times. He has no desire to explore a half mile of road unknown to him and protests against starting in a direction opposite to that he is wont to travel until the car has been repeatedly shoved against him when

to a distance of eighty or one hundred feet, and as the strata of stone which has given the Buena Vista district an enviable reputation for half a century, continues uninterrupted along the side of the hill for an indefinite distance, the process of development is carried on simply and inexpensively, enabling them to place the stone on the market at a reasonable figure, and allow a fair margin of profit. In fact they possess facilities for quarrying, sawing and shipping unsurpassed by any other quarry in the country and to the prompt execution of orders may be attributed the popularity established by this concern.

The stone in this new opening is a darker shade than that formerly marketed by them, and is of a most beautiful color and of superior quality. It is entirely free from iron rust or any other discoloring materials, as shown by the following analytical test:

| | |
|-----------------------------------|----------------|
| Silica | 90.22 per cent |
| Alumina | 6.25 " |
| Iron Oxides | 2.37 " |
| Lime | .87 " |
| Magnesia..... | 0.26 " |
| Carbonic Acid Water and Loss..... | 0.23 " |

Twenty-five blocks of 30 cubic feet each are quarried here in a day and conveyed down the valley to the mill, where they are sawed, placed on the company's boats and conveyed to Cincinnati, the distributing point, where the company's other offices are located and where local and foreign orders receive attention.

In the next valley west are the quarries of the Buena Vista Excelsior Freestone Works, of which John Miller & Sons are proprietors. Three quarries are at present being worked by this concern, two of them being located on a railroad owned and operated by this firm. The third quarry is on the brow of a hill to the east and the stone taken therefrom is freighted by ox teams down the valley through which Twin Creek flows to the mill of the company adjacent to that of the Cadens.

The product of the other quarries is loaded on small flat cars and hauled by locomotive to the top of the hill overlooking Buena Vista and run down an incline to the mill. It is a steep grade from the bottom of this declivity to the yards of the Excelsior Company so that no power is required.

These quarries are exceedingly fortunate, however, in being so near such an excellent market as Cincinnati, which is also a good distributing point for outside sales. They are able to load from their yards and mills directly upon the barges and float same with simply the aid of the current to destination. The yards of both firms are roomy and well stocked with both mill blocks and dimension stone.

The Excelsior Company makes use of a steam traveler in its yard, while at

the Caden mill are steam derricks admirably constructed and excellently cared for, water-proof hoods entirely covering the engines and parts liable to rust. It is no uncommon thing to find flagging four feet wide and of almost any length in the yard of this latter company.

At a distance of less than twenty miles north of Buena Vista in almost a direct line is the town of Otway, where a most excellent quality of free-



MILL OF W. R. SMITH & SONS.

stone is quarried by the firm of W. R. Smith & Sons. Here also is the stone saw mill of this firm, a view of which is given here-with.

This mill is kept busy night and day filling orders for the buff stone now so popular among all architects and builders. At present most of their stone is being quarried at Freestone a short distance east on the C. P. & V. R. R., but they expect to shortly build an in-

cline to the top of the hill directly back of their works where an excellent quality of rock is found without the need of much stripping.

At Freestone the quarry of this concern is found to be quite extensive and is located up in the hills, about half a mile from the railroad. The stripping is very light at this place, as the hills are not precipitous. Hauling to the railroad is done by oxen, and the relations between Mr. Smith and the officials of the road are so pleasant that no inconvenience is met with for lack of cars or means to convey them to the mill.

Contiguous to this quarry are those of Mr. Cole, the ledges of which approximate four or five feet in thickness. Further west, on the same line of road between Freestone and Otway, is Henley. Back among the hills is found the "Henley Blue," which combined with the "Otway Buff" arouses the admiration of architects and builders alike. The quality of these stones is about the same, and the texture is very even in both of them, and owing to the indefatigable efforts of W. R. Smith, Jr., and his energetic representative, Mr. C. E. Holley, of Cincinnati, their combination is finding its way into eastern cities, where it is deservedly popular.

(photo caption: "Mill of W. R. Smith & Sons)

The water-works at Eden Park, Cincinnati, contain specimens of Otway buff as do also the handsome residences of Mr. Kramer and General Goshorn, a photogravure of whose place is shown in the July issue of the *Inland Architect*.

The new bridge across the Ohio at Cincinnati drew extensively on Mr. Smith's quarries, as did also the new viaduct. The architects of eastern



QUARRY OF W. R. SMITH & SONS.

cities are specifying "Otway Buff" and "Henley Blue" extensively, and not a little of the buff finds its way south and west.

Less than twenty-five miles east of Otway is Portsmouth, which has just outside its borders some very pretty bluestone in ledges of varying thickness. The greatest quantity of this stone is found

along a creek two miles west of the Scioto river, called Carey's Run. Here are quarries belonging to Reitz & Co., Bode & Son and Wishon. Reitz & Co. have quarries east of the creek and highway as well as elsewhere, and have but little stripping to do, with good depth of rock. This firm has a very extensive mill in the city of Portsmouth, which we hope shortly to illustrate together with views of their yard, which is now being fitted with derricks and every convenience for handling the extensive business they carry on, not only in Portsmouth stone alone, but in that from other quarries.

In the northeastern part of the city are found the works of Bode & Son, which are kept running constantly on stone from their own quarries and others—considerable brown stone being cut by them.

Thirty miles north of Portsmouth on the Scioto Valley division of the Norfolk & Virginia R. R. is Waverly, where blue, buff and brown sand and freestone are quarried by the Waverly Stone Company—a company recently organized, and which is doing much to redeem the reputation of the excellent building stone found at this place, but which has been brought into disrepute by reason of the machinations of an unprincipled

(photo caption: "Quarry of W. R. Smith & Sons")

and untrustworthy employe of the former owners. The combination of their buff and blue stone produces a pleasing effect, and a proper name for their brown stone would be "old gold." The color and texture of this stone is uniform throughout, as it is also in their buff and blue, and with increased facilities for sawing these various stones, and with energetic work on the part of its efficient officers, there is no reason to expect anything but a successful career for the new company.

Good stone is the prime factor in the success of quarry-owners, and those of the freestone district certainly have quality as well as quantity. It is claimed for freestone coming from this district that it is the most durable stone that can be put into a structure. It is entirely proof against frost, and is claimed to be nearer fireproof than any other stone known. While it is easily worked it is compact and sufficiently hard to resist any ordinary usage. It hardens with age and does not corrode, and altogether combines a great number of superior qualities for building and other purposes.

Key names used in the “The Ohio Freestone District” article include: Buena Vista Freestone Company, Buena Vista, Ohio; Caden Company; Buena Vista Excelsior Freestone Works; John Miller & Sons; “Henley Blue,” “Otway Buff”; W. R. Smith & Sons; Reitz & Co.; Bode & Sons; Wishon; Waverly Stone Company;