

# **“California Marble”**

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<http://quarriesandbeyond.org/states/ca/california.html>

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“Strangers visiting San Francisco and other cities of California are at once struck by the absence of the use of marble in the construction of our dwellings and business blocks. This fact is brought more forcibly to their minds when after a short stay here they become convinced that there are a great many men of wealth in this state, also that they reside in beautiful and costly homes, at the same time these houses are constructed almost entirely of wood, thus the impression is forced upon the visitor that marble is not to be had here only at such a price that almost prohibits its use, that we must depend solely on our vast forests of redwood and other timber for our building material.

“It is with a view that some of these same visitors may read this article and become convinced that the conditions here are just the reverse that we publish it; at the same time may it serve to call attention to the residents of our state and those intending to build, that we have confined in the hills and mountains of California vast deposits of white, variegated and colored marbles. Material that for strength, durability and appearance will compare with any produced in the world, and above all cheaper than the imported article.

“It is my intention in this review of the different marble deposits of the state to show no favor to any particular material, but as near as in my power make a fair statement of the various kinds and qualities, where they are quarried, and such other information as I may have, when the purchaser can judge for himself after an examination of the different materials. However, I do not hesitate to say that if there is a deposit of poor marble being worked in California to-day I do not know of it. They are all good, will take the place, and in many cases, give better satisfaction than the imported article.

### **Inyo County Marble**

“**Inyo county marble** – Near the base of the Inyo mountains in Owens valley near the lake of the same name, lies what is perhaps the largest and most wonderful deposits of marble that has been as yet discovered. It is impossible to describe truthfully these vast deposits of beautifully colored stones.

“There is white, black, blue and yellow in pure colors, purple veined, black and gold, making a grand variety of colored marbles very beautiful for interior decoration. The white marble is perfectly clear, the grain is fine, very compact and will stand great pressure; it is pure dolomite, therefore, will take on and retain a very fine polish.

“The first two stories of the Mills Building in this city are, as well as a greater part of the interior finish of same, done in this material, and is a most creditable piece of work, the main entrance to the building shows what may be done in the way of relief with the white marble.

“The black is almost identical in color with the Belgium black marble, it is very difficult to distinguish one from the other when polished. The yellow marble varies from a delicate cream to a dark mottled orange, there are veins of deeper yellow with fern like markings similar to moss agate; is particularly adapted for furniture and interior decorations.

“**Inyo moss agate marble.** – The color of this runs from light to dark lively browns with beautiful fern like markings, and I understand is the only marble of the kind known; it takes a fine polish.

“Much more could be said of the colored marbles of Inyo county but I must retain space for some of the other counties and their marble. Yet before passing from Inyo it is but just that I mention the fact of it being my extreme good fortune a few days since to be shown a very large collection of fancy colored marbles (in sample) from Italy, and at the time I took pains to obtain from the party the pieces of the different varieties on board the vessel at Genoa, Italy, and also delivered here in San Francisco. I found the prices of this colored marble were far in excess of the Inyo colored material, and while I must admit that there was some very beautiful specimens of marble in the collection from Italy, I say without fear of contradiction, that the colored marble of Inyo county is fully up to their standard, and in my judgment much more beautiful. The question may be asked, are the Inyo deposits being worked? I answer yes, and with a plant of the most improved machinery, capable of turning out as high a grade of work as can be done any place in the world.

### **Amador County Marble.**

“Situated about six miles from Jackson, county seat of this county, is vast deposits of True marble and what is perhaps the finest material (of the marble family) yet discovered in the United States. There are many points about this material which are pleasurable to note.

“As yet there are but two varieties developed, although the vein is uncovered on the face of the hill for a length of about 275 feet and a height of over 400. This marble is variegated in color, one a gray black vein and the other a pure white with jet black veins. The markings of the variety is similar to some of the Italian marble and is far more beautiful from the fact of the black veins standing out in bold view, while in the case of the Italian marble of this grade, the black veins seem to be beneath the surface and are more of a grey than black; a comparison of the two materials leads to a verdict in favor of the Amador marble. A feature of this material, which I have not seen in any marble yet discovered in the United States, is that it is very compact, of great strength when put under pressure, yet very easily worked, saws much better than the Italian, and for relief work is much preferable to the imported material. I have talked with several marble workers about this and in each case they inform me that the Amador marble worked up better than the Italian. These quarries were first opened by an Italian of years experience in the quarries at Carrara, Italy, recognizing the excellent features of the material. He came to San Francisco and organized a company composed mostly of his own countrymen, who were fully alive to the fact that in the Amador marble they had a material that compared with what they had seen in their own country. The company was named ‘The Carrara Marble Company of Amador,’ after the city of Carrara, Italy. About \$50,000 have been spent in the opening of the quarries by these parties. The most prominent piece of work done in this material

was the interior work and grand stairway of the Stanford University Museum, and is really a magnificent piece of marble work. I am reliably informed that samples of this material have been shown to Mr. Vechhi, one of the largest quarry owners in Italy. He pronounced it equal to the best (outside the statuary) Italian material, and predicted that it would eventually drive the imported article out of the markets of the Pacific Coast. This marble received the highest recommendation from the United States Supervising Architect of all the different varieties of stones presented to the government (in samples) for use in the construction of the proposed new postoffice in San Francisco.

### **San Bernardino County Marble**

“Here again we have an immense deposit of marble very different in character from that of Inyo or Amador counties, at the same time it is a very fine material of different varieties. There is black, dark gray and blue, these are variegated; also pure white. The deposit is situated about one mile from the town of Colton, has excellent railroad facilities and an improved plant of machinery for working the marble into slabs, pillars, wainscoting and tiling. A company was organized some four years ago to work this deposit. Their principal marble job was done in the interior of the new Academy of Sciences in this city.

“I am informed that the property or the business of the company has now passed into the hands of two experienced marble men from the Eastern states, and I understand that these men are fully able to handle the quarries as well as the mill. I trust their efforts will be successful, for the marble from these quarries is worth of the consideration of every one intending to build or desiring to use marble in any form.

### **San Diego County Marble**

“San Diego county also contains a deposit of green marble, a beautiful stone very much the nature of onyx. Sometime since, the parties owning these quarries started in to open them. I have no knowledge of what is being done there at present. I have seen the marble in the rough and finished, it takes on a beautiful polish and is worth of a place among the best marbles on the market.

“In many of the other counties of this state deposits of fine marble have been discovered, none of them have been opened to any extent and are only awaiting capital to develop them. –

*The California Architect and Building News.*

