

Marin County Stone Resources circa 1867-1868

Excerpts from

Mineral Resources of the States and Territories West of the Rocky Mountains

By J. Ross Browne

Report to the Committee on Mines and Mining, House of Representatives
During the Second Session of the Fortieth Congress, 1867-1868

This transcription, which begins on the next page, is presented on the
Stone Quarries and Beyond web site in the California state section.

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

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(This book is available on Google Books.)

http://books.google.com/books?id=DEd0JALLPXQC&dq=Mineral+Resources+of+the+States+and+Territories+West+of+the+Rocky+Mountains+1867-68&source=gbs_navlinks_s

Building Materials in California (circa 1867)

(pp. 247-250)

“Building Materials. – The mountainous nature of the Pacific coast, and the geological formations to which the rocks composing the mountains belong, suggest the existence of a great variety of building materials. Few countries possess greater abundance or variety of these materials than California, and there are few cities in the United States where equal opportunities are afforded for comparing the merits of the materials used in other countries with those obtained at home, than are presented at San Francisco. In the early days of this city everything was imported, from bread to clothing for its inhabitants to lumber, brick and stone for their houses. The city hall is built of Australian freestone, several of the banks and other large edifices are built of China granite, and there are hundreds of steps, pillars, lintels, and other portions of buildings, of sandstone and granite imported from the Atlantic States and Europe. The foundations of many of the old buildings in the city are laid on imported bricks. None of these materials are found to be as durable or as handsome as those since obtained in California. In this, as in other mineral resources, the cost of labor and transportation has impeded development. It is only under favorable conditions that stone for building will pay to ship to San Francisco from the interior of the State; while the cheapness, excellence, and abundance of the lumber, and the general adaptability of the soil for the manufacture of bricks, cause these materials to be used for building almost everywhere throughout the State. The introduction of iron mouldings for the decorative portions of large structures prevents a demand for stone for such purposes. The Bank of California building, at San Francisco, is the only structure of cut stone of any magnitude, outside of the government fortifications, on the Pacific coast. Under such circumstances little attention is paid to opening quarries to test the quality of the stone. The consumption of stone is confined to granite for curbing and paving the streets, and the basements and steps for a few of the more costly buildings at San Francisco.

Sandstones, &c. in California (circa 1867)

“Sandstones, &c. – Brown stone of good quality for building purposes is quarried near Hayward’s (sic), Alameda county. Some of this stone is used in the city cemeteries as bases for monuments and for building vaults. Its somber appearance is considered an advantage.

“Greenish-gray sandstone is obtained from Angel island, in the Bay of San Francisco. Of this beautiful stone the new building of the Bank of California has been built. The scroll-work and sculpture on the front are fine and smooth in outline as if cut in marble, while the color is soft and pleasant to the eye. Each pillar, lintel, and post of the doors and windows is formed of a single block, some of them 10 feet in length. The wheels used in the linseed oil factory at Steamboat Point are also made of Angel Island stone. These wheels are seven feet in diameter and 18 inches thick, each weighing five tons.

“In several of the interior counties are deposits of a variety of trachytes, forming portions of table mountain, which make good materials for buildings. It is generally a pinkish or gray color, fine in grain, and when first taken from the quarry is sufficiently soft to be trimmed with a common hatchet, but a few months’ exposure to the air renders it quite hard. A valuable deposit is found near Mokelumne Hill, Calaveras county. Wells & Fargo’s office, several hotels, and other buildings in that town are made of it. Some of these buildings are 14 years old, and the stones in them retain the marks and edges as when first made.

“A quarry of freestone, of a pale drab color and fine texture, is found near Marsh’s creek, six miles from the Mount Diablo coal mines.

“Near the Merced river, in Mariposa county, on the road between Bear Valley and Stockton, there are beds of freestone well adapted to building purposes. The stone is of a pleasant pinkish tint, with wavy lines of brown and purple, and is compact and stands exposure well. With cheap transportation it would become a favorite for many purposes, as it can be cut cheaper than granite, and is better adapted to building than marble, and is more elegant and durable than brick.”