

“Mineral Resources of California”

By Lynn C. Simpson

San Francisco Chronicle, January 5, 1913, pp. 60

This article, which begins on the next page, is presented on the
Stone Quarries and Beyond web site in the California state section.
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August 2011

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Great Stores of Granite.

“It is in the purely structural materials that California’s great richness lies. If all other sources of building stone, limestone and cement were destroyed, California alone could supply the country for centuries. For 400 miles along the great backbone of the Sierra granite exists in unlimited quantities, while in Southern California and in the Shasta region of the north there are large masses of this valuable stone. Riverside leads in the production of granite, with Madera county second, while Placer, Sacramento, San Bernardino, Tuolumne, and Tulare are also extensive producers, but in a score of other counties there are granite deposits that would yield just as good stone and in just as large quantities if they were developed.

“California granite ranges in color from nearly white to a dark gray and brownish gray. It is found in varying textures, suitable for practically every purpose for which this stone is available. The Raymond quarries in Madera county have produced some of the largest perfect slabs of granite ever quarried in this country. This stone has a fine, even grain which makes it easy to quarry and work. Curb stones from this deposit are split as straight and even as though they had been sawed. Some of the granite in the southern part of the State, as well as that from the Placer and Tuolumne deposits, makes splendid monument material, as it takes a high polish and resists the weather well. For many years large quantities of foreign and Eastern granite were imported, but builders and architects have found that there exists at home a supply of stone which is cheaper and as good as any imported.

“In San Diego there is a deposit of a granite rock called orbicular gabbro, which for ornamental purposes is most valuable. It has a beautiful mottled appearance and is so hard that it takes a high polish. The colorings are rich and the configuration is most attractive.

Marble in Many Counties.

“The California marbles are found in a score of counties, extending all the way from Siskiyou to San Diego. They range in color from pure white to nearly black, including some varieties of beautiful stratified brown and white material found in the desert region of the southeastern part of the State. Some of the white and blue mottled marble from Riverside county is of rare beauty, while Mono county has large deposits of a weirdly variegated marble well adapted to building ornamentation. Nevada county furnishes a gray stone, while the Inyo desert and the Kern mountains contain quantities of rich brown or red marble. In Amador is a deposit of stone which is almost black. San Bernardino has beds of dark blue marble, which has been used extensively in building decoration in all parts of the State. Along the middle fork of the Feather river in Plumas county, there is a veritable mountain of marble. This deposit, which was discovered

many years ago, has been but little developed because of the lack of railroad facilities. With the completion of the Western Pacific Railroad, it will be possible to handle this stone. The marble from this deposit is said to be of fine quality. Placer county has green and blue marbles, which have been tested in samples, but the deposit has not been developed sufficiently to show its extent. Some of the finest pure white marble in the State is that found in Tuolumne county. It has a close, fine grain, which makes it very durable.

Beautiful Onyx Deposits.

“It would not be fair to pass from the discussion of the marble deposits of the State without mentioning the wonderfully beautiful onyx marbles, which are found in three or four places. These deposits will be of great value in the future when the demand for purely ornamental stone develops, as it will with the growth of the population of this Western country.

“Although onyx is found in several places in California, the deposit at Musick, in San Luis Obispo county, is the most valuable so far opened. The onyx is equal of any found in the world. The stone is translucent and takes a fine polish. In color it is white and bluish white beautifully banded. More than a thousand tons of it have been shipped from this quarry. It is of value not only for decorative purposes, but because of its great beauty it is used in the jewelry trade. Most of the stone that has been mined has been shipped to New York. Next in value to this San Luis Obispo onyx deposit are those of the Inyo county desert. The stone found there is somewhat softer than that of San Luis Obispo and in color it is white, mixed with reddish and brownish tints. In Sonoma county also there is a deposit, as yet practically undeveloped, which contains beautiful onyx running through various shades of green. In addition to these deposits onyx is found in Siskiyou, Mendocino, Solano and Mono counties.

Vast Beds of Sandstone.

“The supply of sandstone in California suitable for building purposes is limitless. It is found in immense deposits through the length and breadth of the State in many shades and colors. The hard gray sandstone of Colusa county is the best known and one of the best stones found in the State. This county produces a large part of the stone used in the State and the supply is enormous. The stone extends in an unbroken line for thirty miles. The familiar San Jose stone, which is the material used in the construction of the buildings of Stanford University, comes from Santa Clara county, just south of San Jose.

“Amador county contains a remarkable deposit of red and white sandstone. Stone from this quarry is used in the red trimmings of the Chronicle building and also in the Preston School of Industry at Ione. A few yards from the red sandstone vein in the same quarry there is a deposit of fine hard close-grained stone which is pure white. In addition to these deposits of sandstone, Calaveras, San Luis Obispo, Santa Barbara, Los Angeles, Ventura, Contra Costa, Napa, all contain important beds of this stone. The Ventura deposit is particularly noteworthy because the stone is of a rich chocolate brown color similar to the famous brownstone of the East. The Ventura stone is as hard as that of New York and is more free from blemishes.

“In addition to the three standard building stones, granite, marble, and sandstone, California contains immense masses of volcanic rocks suitable for this purpose. They are found throughout the length and breadth of the State. These stones are little used at present for buildings, but they represent an asset of immense value in the state mineral wealth.

“During the past few years the production of cement in California has increased enormously and it has become one of the State’s most important mineral products. The estimated value of the cement manufactured during the past year is \$10,000,000. It now takes rank next to gold in the list of minerals. The great increase in the use of cement for all structural purposes is mainly responsible for the gain in production. Cement-making materials exist in enormous quantity in a score of counties. If the other sources of supply of the entire world should be wiped out, California could supply all demands with the development of the present known deposits of limestone. While Solano, Napa, San Bernardino, and Santa Cruz counties are the main producers of cement, there are deposits of limestone in many other places only awaiting the coming of capital. In the coast country north of Santa Cruz, for miles great limestone hills extend along the ocean shore that could supply the world with cement for years. In Kern and Los Angeles counties there are veritable mountains of limestone. The cement output is only limited by the demand. With inexhaustible stores of materials and cheap electric power, the future of this industry is assured. As the market widens the output will grow and the time may not be far distant when cement will rank as the leading mineral product of the State.

“The counties of El Dorado and Amador contain immense beds of slate of high grade. These deposits extend for miles in an unbroken line, although they have been developed in only a few places. The roofing material produced cannot be excelled anywhere in the world. Mariposa also has produced some slate, and it is probable that all the mother lode counties contain slate of merchantable quality if it were developed.”