

“The Romance of Verde Antique”

By Basil B. Walsh

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(Note: Following the images of this article, you will find a transcription of the article.)

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ON THE FLOOR OF THE ROXBURY QUARRY

The Romance of Verde Antique

By BASIL B. WALSH

Neighboring in Pork Hill Tops of Vermont

By MRS. W. E. ROSS

By BRUCE R. BUCHANAN

Moving Pictures of Maple Sugar Making

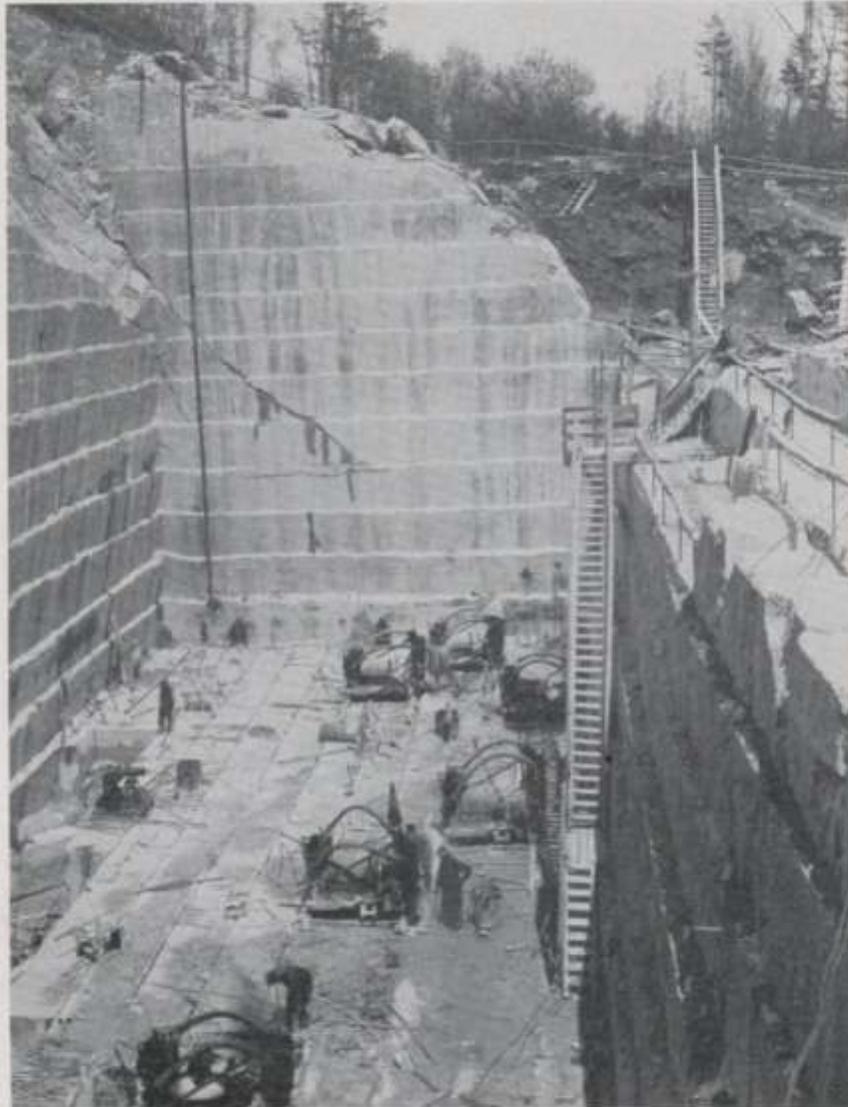
By FLORENCE A. KENDALL

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Number 9



Verde Antique Quarry, Roxbury, Vermont, operated
by the Vermont Marble Company.



The Romance of Verde Antique

By BASIL B. WALSH



T frequent intervals along the western travel routes of old Vermont huge piles of stone may be seen gleaming white against the darker background of the wooded hillsides. It makes little difference whether one travels along the winding highways or rolls between the hills on the equally circuitous railroads, he is bound to gaze on some of these waste heaps which mark the quarried outcroppings of the widely known marbles of the Green Mountain region. Many are near at hand, so close their shadows fall across the way; others flash their whiteness from the green slopes of the lower hills; still others shine like drifts of snow high up on the steep incline of a mountain peak.

It is mainly through valleys drained by the Otter Creek that the entertaining story of Vermont marble has its setting. From the first small workings on exposed ledges, where a few hearth stones and chimney pieces were wedged apart, the industry has experienced a growth truly romantic in its development. To many, the idea of romance in connection with the rather prosaic subject of stone working may seem quite difficult of conception, yet a trip to the actual scenes of production never fails to touch a responsive chord in the realms of imagination.

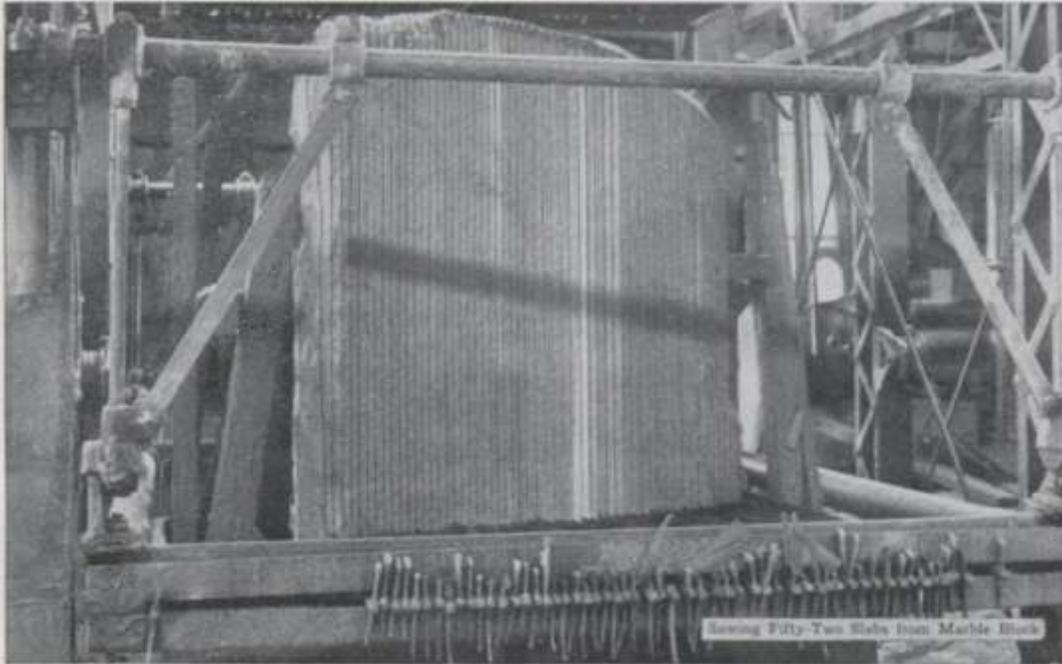
Among the many varieties of marble produced in Vermont, perhaps there is none more attractive than the dark green marble, known as Verde Antique, which is quarried in the central part of the state. The rich

blend of its deep, lustrous colors, entrusted as they are to a stone possessing tremendous weather-defying qualities, have won for it an ever increasing popular demand.

Strictly speaking, Verde Antique is not a true marble; that is, it cannot be classified as a limestone. To geologists it is known as a serpentine. No one knows how the stone acquired this title. Some believe it might have been named after the mottled green appearance of the skin of a snake. Another theory is that at some ancient period fragments of the stone were applied to the human body as a remedy for snake bite, and as its reputation grew along this line, it became closely allied in name, at least, with the deadly serpents.

We find mention of the stone serpentine in the works of many early writers. Pliny refers to it as "ophites." It is the "serpentaria" of G. Agricola. Italian sculptors sometimes termed it "ranochia" in allusion to its resemblance to the skin of a frog. Verde Antico, a brecciated serpentine with fragments of limestone was brought originally by the Romans from Atrax in Thessaly, and called "lapis atracius." The stone became very popular with the luxurious Romans as was evidenced by its extensive and varied uses.

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Sawing Fifty-Two Slabs from Marble Block

variety of marble is very hard, a great deal of labor had to be expended in preparing a small amount for market.

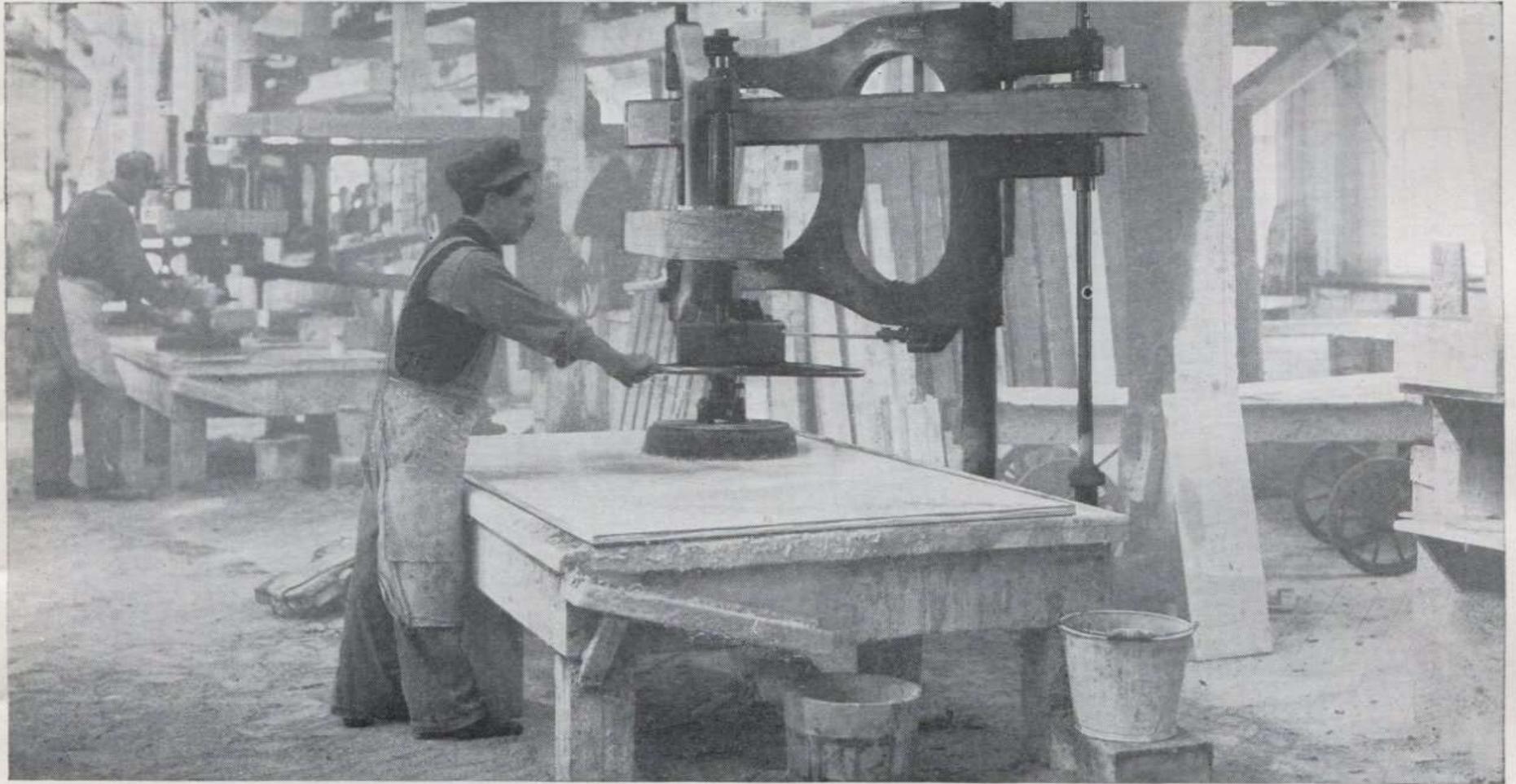
Due to the improved methods of modern machinery Verde Antique is now produced in quantities sufficiently large to make it known as the standard dark green marble of America. The fact that it is coming into more general use is evidenced by the increase in quarry production which in 1924 was twelve times that of 1901. To meet the enlarged demand several new quarries, all in central Vermont, have been developed.

The work of getting out the marble is accomplished by means of the latest and most efficient machinery for stoneworking. A few years ago the atmosphere of a marble quarry was largely filled with steam and smoke from leaking mains and puffing donkey engines. Walls were completely coated with a black film which effectually hid from view the color and markings of the marble, except perhaps where small seepages of water washed it clean. Workmen moved about like phantoms in the mist. Now, all that has cleared away.

Today, a person may gaze into the greenish depths of the Roxbury quarry and find everything plainly visible on the floor beneath, even to the network of wires which

seemingly lie in such a hopeless tangle. For this is the era of electricity. Back and forth on their short iron tracks slowly move the electric channeling machines pounding continually deeper the inch-wide channel cuts. The stamp of those power-driven chisels fills the chasm with a peculiar reverberating roar. On account of the extreme hardness of the marble the machines are equipped with specially tempered cutting steel. As it takes somewhat longer than for other marbles to reach the required depth in these cuts, more than the usual number of channelers are at work on the quarry floor.

Cutting the channel courses into quarry blocks presents another difficult problem. Ordinarily the long strips of marble are divided into cubes by drilling a series of holes at the point where the break is to be made and then wedging along these holes until the block is loosened. This cannot be done successfully with Verde Antique, due to its hardness and peculiar formation. So it has been found necessary to resort once again to the channeling machine which is run at right angles to the first cuts dividing all the courses up into "key blocks." Perhaps it should be explained that in the parlance of the quarryman a "key block" is one of the first to be removed in opening a



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STORE FRONT OF BEAUTIFUL VERMONT VERDE ANTIQUE MARBLE, ROCHESTER, N. Y.

sidewise at right angles to the to-and-fro motion of the buffer. Thus the combined movements of the machine automatically bring the whole surface of the slab under the polisher. This method seems to work very well with Verde Antique as it reduces all parts of the surface to a very even finish. The operator of the Swanton machine slides the heel of his hand along the surface in process of finishing, and if he feels a ridge where a very hard portion of the marble resists the action, the machine is regulated to grind that part with greater emphasis.

All cutting to form is done by carborundum machines wherever possible. Some hand chiseling has to be done on extra large pieces or where designs call for more intricate patterns, but the cutting tools quickly dull which necessitates frequent resharpening. Rubbing down by the usual hand methods puts the polish on these parts.

Vermont Verde Antique is peculiarly adaptable for a wide variety of uses. Its very hardness, originally somewhat of a production handicap, later is a great advantage as far as tenacious weathering qualities are

concerned. As one authority states: "Its composition is such as to render it one of the most indestructible rocks in nature." Thus we often find the stone employed in places exposed to the elements, as the exterior finish of attractive storefronts; or brought into use where hard wear is expected, notably in the floors of halls, corridors and sun parlors.

As a decorative stone Verde Antique is in constant demand, and is frequently used in combination with other marbles for the embellishment of interiors. Very beautiful columns are turned from it, although they are somewhat limited in size owing to the difficulty of obtaining large blocks at the quarries. There is an almost unlimited demand for it in smaller work like counter-tops, check desks, bank screens and lamp bases.

It does not seem probable that this Verde Antique can ever become common for, according to geological surveys the supply is not unlimited, although there are a number of outcroppings in the eastern part of the state. It occurs chiefly in isolated



VERMONT VERDE ANTIQUE IN LOBBY OF THE HOTEL TRAYMORE, ATLANTIC CITY

masses which resemble the shape of a double-convex lens standing on edge.

To say that this stone is wholly unlike any other Vermont stone is hardly necessary. It is a superb variety and one of the most elegant of marbles. In appearance the principal color is green in shades varying from light or apple green to almost black. Many pieces are very dark. Numerous white veins run through it, sometimes so closely interwoven that they appear more like patches, but these cover only a small portion of the surface, the larger part being a dark green.

In color and general character it is a true Verde Antique, and is quite equal to any found elsewhere. Its quality has been

reported by Prof. G. H. Perkins as follows: "So far as I have seen no finer Verde Antique has anywhere been found. I have certainly seen none better, rarely so good, in European Churches."

The marble deposits of Vermont are famed for the varieties produced. Probably no other region in the world contains, in such a small area, so many distinctive kinds. They seem to reflect, in the tinge of their colored markings, all the freshness and romanticism of the Green Mountain Country. And it is quite appropriate that Verde Antique, America's standard green marble, should prove equally reminiscent of the rugged slopes and deep, quiet valleys of its native state.

Neighboring in Pork

By MRS. W. E. ROSS



WHO was that drove out of the yard, Polly?" Mrs. Baker anxiously thrust her head through the back kitchen door and met her daughter just coming in, carrying a large bundle in her arms.

"It was Mr. Brown, mother. He butchered this forenoon and brought us over this piece of fresh pork."

"Land sakes! Kind of early to butcher, I should think. What kind of piece is it Polly?"

Polly unwrapped the package. "It's a shoulder, Ma."

"Well, that's a nice part of a hog. Lay it in the milk-room and we'll cook it this afternoon and have some for breakfast in the morning. Queer time to butcher, August, I should think," she added, as she went back to her washing in the back kitchen.

The piece of fresh pork was duly sampled by the Baker family the next morning and pronounced excellent.

"When are you going to butcher, Pa?" asked ten-year old Frank.

"Not till about Thanksgiving, son," replied Farmer Baker. "Fresh meat won't keep good till after then, generally speaking."

"Why did Mr. Brown kill this one now, Nathan?" asked Mother Baker.

"Oh, likely he got out o' meat, and this was a small one. 'Twon't take long for his family to eat it. 'Twon't spoil."

A week passed, and September was ushered in with glorious leaves, golden pumpkins and luscious red apples. Polly and Frank were in school. Mrs. Baker was busy sewing rug rags one sunny afternoon in the sitting-room, when she heard a cheery voice in the kitchen. "Anyone at home?"

"Sure!" exclaimed Mrs. Baker as she started toward the kitchen. "Oh, it's you, Mrs. Smith," as she reached the door. "Come right in here."

"Well, I can't stop long. I thought I'd bring you over a spare-rib. Jonas butchered this morning."

"Well now, baked rib is my favorite part. Much obliged. Sit down, Mrs. Smith." Mrs. Smith sat down, and the two talked weather, school, styles and church affairs until supper time, when Mrs. Smith took her departure.

The spare-rib was duly eaten and thought to be very fine.

Two days later Mr. Baker went to Green's Station with a load of fat calves to car. On his way home he was hailed by a buxom housewife. "Mr. Baker, hold on a minute!" She then disappeared inside the house. Presently she came running down to the road with a large package wrapped in newspaper.

"Thought maybe you folks would like some fresh meat," she panted, "we butchered yesterday."

“The Romance of Verde Antique” (Marble/Serpentine)

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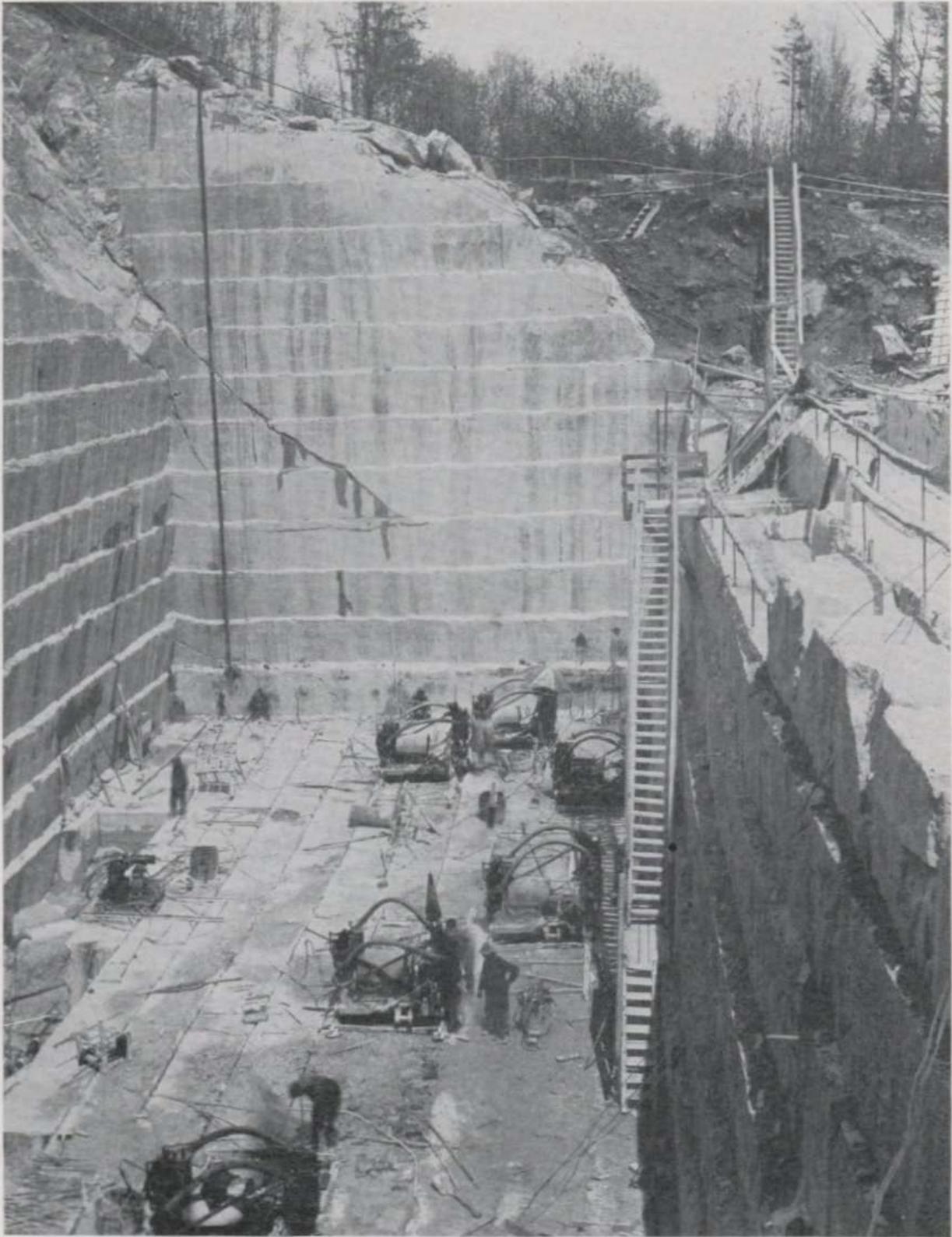
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“On the floor of the Roxbury Quarry”

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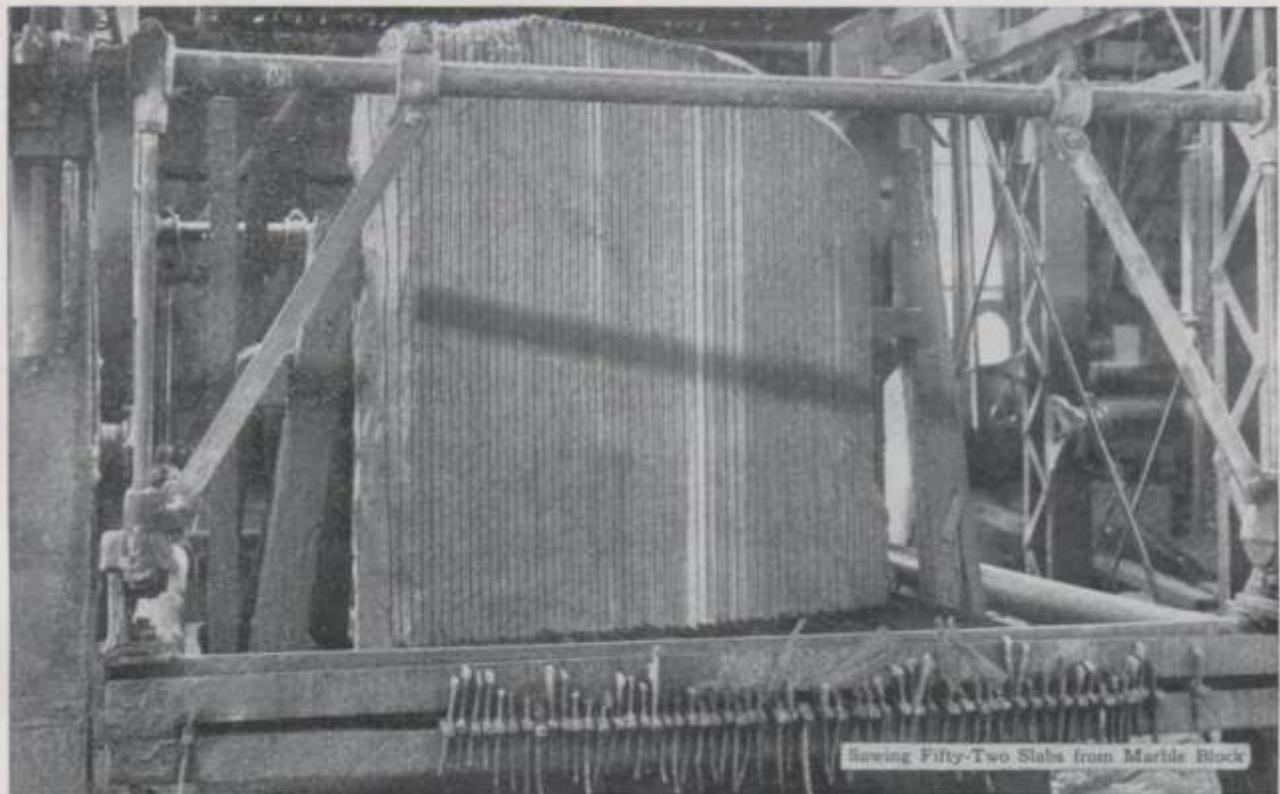
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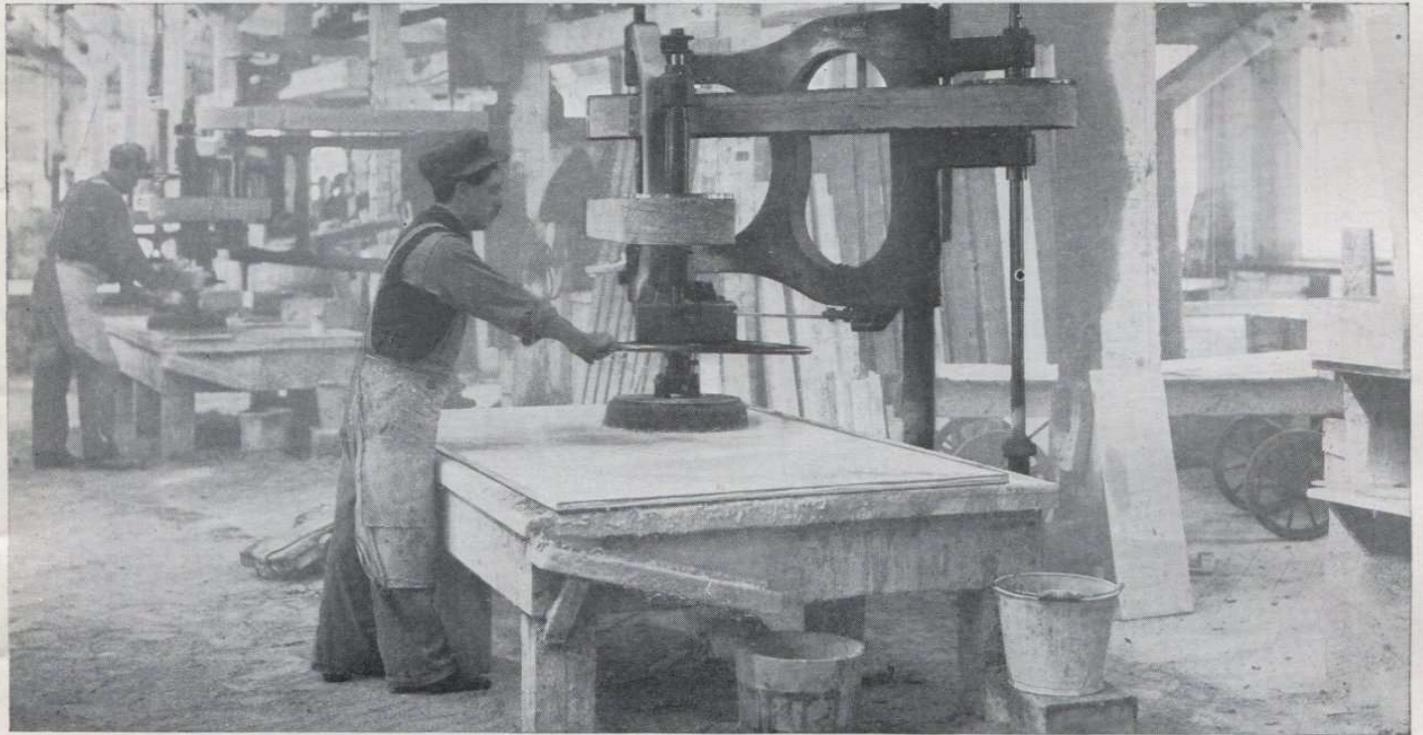
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“Verde Antique marble is shipped from the quarry to an especially designed and equipped finishing plant at Swanton, Vermont. Here at the lower falls of the Missisquoi River the iron blades of twenty-four gang saws, aided by a continuous supply of sand and water, slowly cut the blocks into slabs of various thicknesses. So resistant is this marble that the average cutting distance of the saws in one hour is barely half an inch. The saws have to be strictly watched to see that they are always kept at a certain tension on account of the extremely hard bands or courses running through the marble which have a tendency to deflect the blades from their normal path through the block.



“Sawing Fifty-two Slabs from Marble Block”

“After leaving the gangs the marble may go to the rubbing beds, or directly to the carborundum machines. The process of smoothing the surfaces and squaring the edges and corners on the rubbing beds is exactly like that in general use on other marbles. A large, flat, iron disk, whirling somewhat like a huge phonograph record, is covered with sand and water which grind the stone down in preparation for its final polish.



ILLUSTRATING THE PROCESS OF POLISHING MARBLE

“Illustrating the Process of Polishing Marble”

“Verde Antique is capable of taking an exceedingly high and beautiful finish. At the Swanton plant a special but not a new method is employed in attaining the desired lustre. A buffer, to which are applied the various grits, rubs over the surface to be polished by means of a piston arm working horizontally back and forth. A ratchet attachment connected to the piston moves the table, on which the marble rests, slowly sidewise at right angles to the to-and-fro motion of the buffer. Thus the combined movements of the machine automatically bring the whole surface of the slab under the polisher. This method seems to work very well with Verde Antique as it reduces all parts of the surface to a very even finish. The operator of the Swanton machine slides the heel of his hand along the surface in process of finishing, and if he feels a ridge where a very hard portion of the marble resists the action, the machine is regulated to grind that part with greater emphasis.

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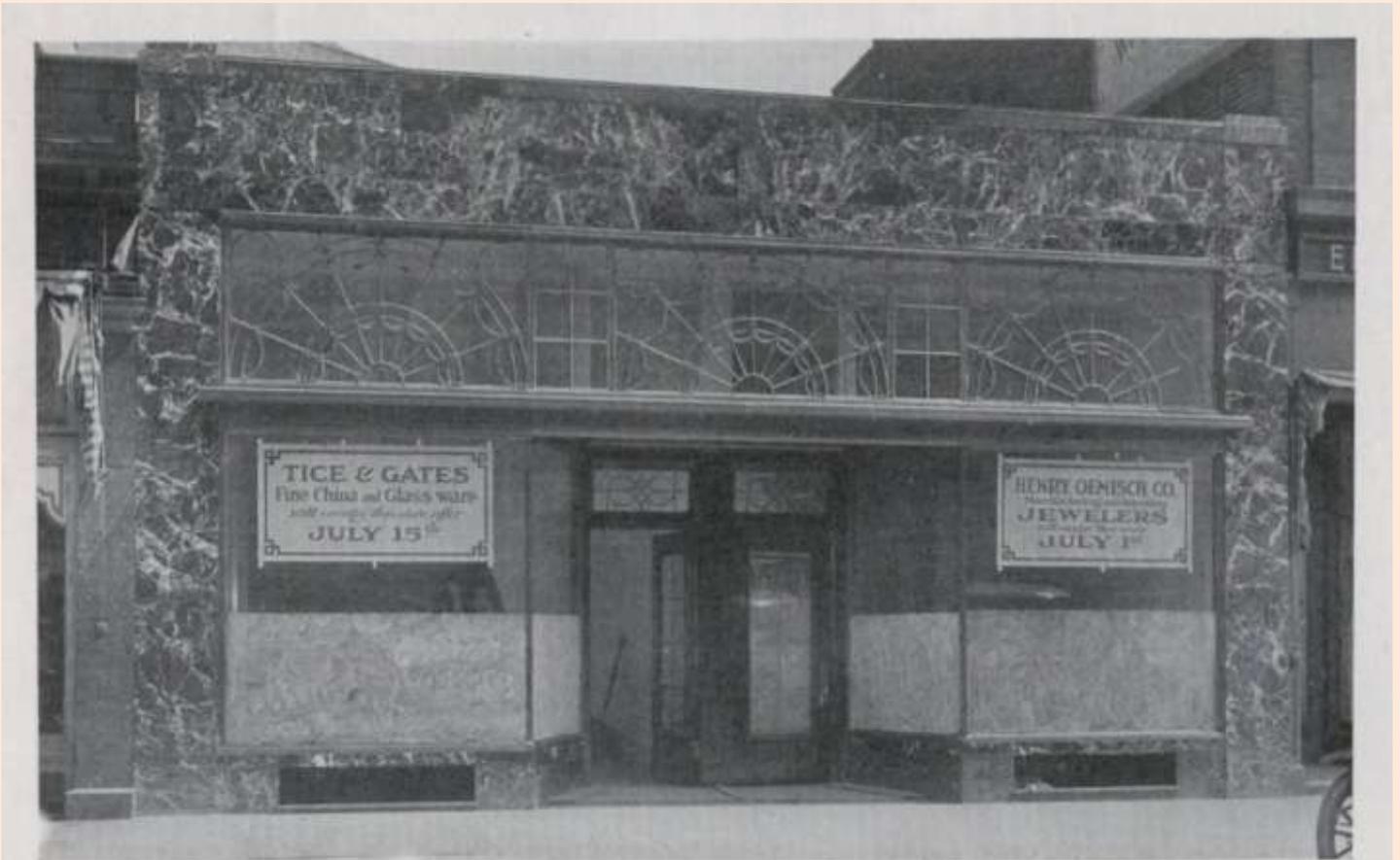
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(Continued on the next page.)



STORE FRONT OF BEAUTIFUL VERMONT VERDE ANTIQUE MARBLE, ROCHESTER, N. Y.

“Store Front of Beautiful Vermont Verde Antique Marble, Rochester, N.Y.”

(Company names on the front of the building: Tice & Gates, Fine China and Glass Ware & Henry Oemisch Co., Jewelers)

(Continued on the next page.)



VERMONT VERDE ANTIQUE IN LOBBY OF THE HOTEL TRAYMORE, ATLANTIC CITY

“Vermont Verde Antique in Lobby of the Hotel Traymore, Atlantic City.” (New Jersey)