

THE DEVELOPMENT OF STONE CITY

(A letter from Senator J. A. Green,¹ the founder, to Dr. S. G. Matson)

Stone City, Iowa, January 13, 1896.

Dr. S. G. Matson,²

Viola, Iowa.

Dear Doctor Matson:

In compliance with your wish for my personal recollections of Stone City, its beginning, growth and prosperity, I cheerfully compile the following, being true, as I believe it.

I came here where Stone City now stands on March 17, 1868, and found it a vast wilderness with heavy timber on all sides, but fast yielding to the woodman's ax. The wood so cut was used by the railway company for ties and fuel, no coal being then used in this part of the state. There were then three quarries in operation, on what we now call a very small scale, of which I will give you a history below.

At this time the only signs of civilization for many miles were a frame building at Crouse, Shaw & Weaver's quarry, since burned, a lime kiln at the same place, and a stone house at Haines & Lewis', which still stands and is used for a residence

¹John A. Green was born in County Roscommon, Ireland, December 10, 1844, and died at Cedar Rapids, Iowa, February 25, 1920. Burial was in Holy Cross Cemetery, Anamosa. He emigrated to America with his parents in 1852, stopping in Boston, where he attended school. He then for ten years worked as a stonecutter and letterer. He came to Joliet, Illinois, in 1865, and to the hills west of Anamosa, later known as Stone City, in 1868. Here he opened the limestone quarries which in a few years developed into a concern employing at one time several hundred men, thriving until cement came into general use, when the quarries declined. Mr. Green also successfully conducted farming and fine stock raising. He was progressive, successful and generous, and was a liberal supporter of church and hospital work. He was a leader in the Democratic party of his county and district. In 1891 he was elected senator from the Cedar-Jones district, and served in the Twenty-fourth and Twenty-fifth general assemblies. In 1904 he was the unsuccessful candidate for Congress in the Fifth District.—*ANNALS OF IOWA*, Vol. XII, p. 552, January, 1921.

²Sylvester G. Matson was born in Middlesex, Vermont, March 5, 1808. His boyhood was spent on a New England farm where he secured a liberal education and became a teacher. He graduated in the Medical Department of the State University and became a practicing physician. In 1845 he removed to Iowa Territory, locating near Anamosa. In 1846 he was elected a member of the convention which framed the Constitution under which Iowa became a state. He was the same year chosen a member of the House of the First General Assembly and helped to frame the first laws for the government of the new state. He was chairman of the Committee on Schools and reported the bill which provided for a State University. Mr. Matson was influential in framing the first school laws and was chosen a trustee of the State University. As a legislator he left the impress of his early work upon the permanent laws of the state. He was a Democrat up to the time of the organization of the Republican party when he united with it in opposition to slavery. He died on the 5th of February, 1898.—*Gue's History of Iowa*, Vol. IV, p. 185.

by John Ronen. There was at Parsons & Webb's a board shanty used for a boarding house, and two log houses, all gone long since. From that time to the present some building has been done every year. In September, 1873, we had a post office located here, naming the new born city to correspond with the business which was to be most prominent. Your humble servant named the place Stone City, which has grown into a hamlet of 600 people, and draws more money from other states than any town in Iowa. It has an opera house, hotel and business house combined, 160 feet long, three stories high, and is built of the ever-enduring stone produced here.

Stone City has water power sites, and is destined to be a large city in the near future. The writer hopes to see it, in connection with the vast quarry business, a manufacturing city of magnificent proportions, it being well situated for that purpose.

The first stone used from these hills was by the army in territorial times, in the construction of bridges on the highways, which stand as monuments of the perfection of this stone, it being as perfect as the day it was taken from its natural bed, wearing as well as granite possibly could.

The first stone shipped abroad was to Dubuque and Cedar Falls by rail in 1859 by David Graham, who opened the first quarry here, on the center of section 5, 84 north, 4 west, which is still in operation. It was successively owned and operated by D. Graham, Haines & Lewis, M. Hiscy, and John Ronen, the present operator. From the beginning to the present time, 28,134 cars have been shipped, of which John Ronen shipped from 1881 to the present time, 23,134 cars.

About 1852 Mr. Haggard quarried from the top of the hill on the extreme west end of the Stratified Stone Basin, stone which was hauled by wagon to Cornell College, at Mount Vernon, which was then building. All the trimming for that building, which is perfect today, was hauled over the then uninhabited prairies, there being no railroads here in those days. This speaks well for this stone, as stone was then found in abundance at the foot of the hills where Mount Vernon now stands. The hill from which these stones were taken was afterwards sold to Dr. S. G. Matson and called Mount Hope, and was owned and managed

by Dr. S. G. Matson, then by James & Ross and afterwards by James & Ronen, who shipped 5,000 carloads of stone. This quarry has not been worked for many years and is at this writing dormant.

Next to enter the field were Crouse, Shaw & Weaver who opened a quarry adjacent to the first one opened. They commenced operation in 1866 and continued until 1872, when they sold to the state of Iowa, and it was then worked by convicts from Anamosa, the penitentiary having just been established there. Crouse, Shaw & Weaver shipped from their quarry in the years 1866 to 1872 inclusive, about 4,000 cars. The state shipped for its own use and that of the public, as it sold stone for two years, when the legislature passed a resolution preventing the state from entering on the market against free labor, from 1872 to the time they abandoned it in 1878, about 5,000 cars. This quarry was afterwards sold to J. A. Green, who operates it on a small scale, to fill the deficiency of Champion Quarry No. 1. He has shipped from here about 5,000 cars.

In 1866, the same year which Crouse, Shaw & Weaver opened their quarry which is in the extreme east of the Stratified Stone Basin, Parsons & Webb opened what they called Crow Creek Quarry, it being on the center of section 6 on the Jones and Linn county line, and in the same hill as the Mount Hope Quarries. They continued to do business under that name until 1868 when J. B. Webb bought out Parsons and ran it in his own name until 1877, since which time it has not been worked. There being no data at hand the shipments from this quarry are estimated at about 4,000 cars.

In the spring of 1869 H. Dearborn commenced business on the n.e. $\frac{3}{4}$ of section 6, 84 north, 4 west, on the north bank of the Wapsipinicon. He is still in business, operating under the name of H. Dearborn & Sons, in the place where he first commenced business and from where he has shipped a total of 27,432 cars.

In the year 1869 J. A. Green opened the Champion Quarries No. 1 on the south side of the Wapsipinicon River, and about the center of the Stratified Stone Basin which has proved to be exceedingly good. From here he has shipped 47,618 cars. In

addition to this J. A. Green opened a quarry in 1887 on the C. & N. W. Ry. from which he has shipped some 7,000 carloads. This quarry he calls Johnellen. It bids fair to turn out millions of carloads, it being the highest face in this stratification and embraces several hundred acres.

The next quarry to be opened at Stone City is the one known as Gold Hill, which was opened in 1883 by Dawson & Hess and afterwards bought and operated by F. S. Brown & Co. in 1887, they having commenced business on July 7 of that year. From this quarry and another face adjacent, which F. S. Brown & Co. opened and named Mammoth Quarry, were shipped a total of 14,000 cars, of which F. S. Brown & Co. shipped 11,983 cars.

In 1884 the state of Iowa abandoned its quarry on the Wapsipinicon and purchased one on the Buffalo River near Anamosa, which it still operates, and from which it is erecting its own buildings and supplying state institutions. It must have shipped from 1884 to 1895 inclusive, some 15,000 cars.

In the spring of 1894 James Lawrence opened a leased quarry on the Buffalo, adjoining the State Quarry, from which he has shipped about 50 cars in the two years he has been in business.

These are all the quarries opened for railroad transportation, and we find the total number of cars shipped to be about 156,229, at an average valuation of \$20.00 per car, which is very low, amounts to \$3,124,580.00. This stone has been spread over eight states, namely: Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Minnesota, Dakota, Nebraska, Kansas, and Missouri. It is in the finest buildings and bridges in those states namely: The Boston Block, a seven-story building 56 x 120 feet, all stone; Washburn Building; Sidel Building; Congregational Church; and the Great Arch Double Track Viaduct across the Mississippi River below the Falls of St. Anthony, all the above in Minneapolis. Besides these there are in Iowa two of the large shops at Rock Island Arsenal, the Guard House and Barracks, also six officers' quarters; the Blind Asylum at Vinton; the Sabula, Keethsburg and Fort Madison railroad bridges, and the Lyons, Clinton and Muscatine highway bridges. There is also the Insane Asylum at Norfolk, Nebraska. In Wisconsin, Minnesota and Illinois the C. B. & N. Ry. and the C. & G. W. bridges on their entire lines; and those of the

Illinois Central in Iowa and Illinois. The entire system of the C. M. & St. P., the B. C. R. & N., the C. & N. W. as well as the C. R. I. & P., virtually, all the roads in the Northwest have used it to their entire satisfaction. The Iowa Hospital for Insane at Independence is built of this stone, also the columns under the Rotunda in the State Capitol where strength is required.

There are very few towns or cities but have used it wherever stone was required. It can safely be said that no more durable stone, except granite, exists.

Yours very sincerely,

J. A. GREEN.

NOTICE

The subscriber would inform those who have applied for teachers from the National Board of Public Education at the West, that he has just received intelligence that this Society will not be able to furnish any teachers for Iowa from the Spring Class, as the applications reached me too late, and the Spring Class has been unusually small, while the demand has been unusually great. Prior applications must have precedence. The next Class will assemble at Hartford, Connecticut, on the 1st of August, and may reach Iowa by the 1st of October. Those wishing to obtain teachers through this source should make their applications early, through J. W. Webber, Esq., Secretary of the Iowa Committee, Burlington, Iowa.

JAMES A. CLARK.

Fort Madison, May 23d, 1848.

—*The Iowa Statesman*, Fort Madison, Iowa, May 27, 1848, page 2, column 6. (In the Newspaper Division of the Historical, Memorial and Art Department of Iowa.)

(The above James A. Clark was evidently the Reverend James A. Clark, a graduate of Yale College in 1834 and sent out as a missionary to Iowa, and was located at Fort Madison. See address of William Salter, ANNALS, Vol. IV, p. 623.—Editor ANNALS.)

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