

# Quincy History



Quincy, Massachusetts

Quincy Historical Society

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## The North Common Quarry Lands

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In the days when granite was bringing prosperity and fame to Quincy, the quarrying activity was centered in two areas: the hills of West Quincy and the North Common area around present Quarry Street.<sup>2</sup> Nearly all of Quincy's fifty-four true quarries and the related activities were located in these two places. With the two areas having so much in common, it is surprising to find that the two have very different histories.

Ten years ago a study was made of the land ownership and quarry operations in the West Quincy quarry area.<sup>3</sup> The study showed that the lands were always privately owned, and prior to the opening of the Bunker Hill Quarry in 1826 were generally people's woodlots. Some stone was undoubtedly removed over the years, and some profit made, but they were owned primarily to supply people's needs for wood and to produce income from the sale of wood. The hills of West Quincy became a factor in Quincy's granite activities starting in 1826.

A study of the land ownership and quarry operations in the North Common area has just been completed. It reveals a history very different from its West Quincy counterpart, a history that goes back to early colonial days.

The town-owned Common Lands of Old Braintree consisted principally of two tracts of land: the North Common, and the South Common which was in the present Faxon Park area and extending into present Braintree. The North Common was much the larger, of much more value in its assets to the town, and much more of a problem to



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**The former powerhouse building of the Hitchcock Quarry stood on Quarry Street until September 1983, a last vestige of the granite quarrying industry on the North Common.**

the town fathers. In the Town records, most mentions of the Common Lands refer to the North Common.

Common land was property of which a town retained ownership for the benefit of all residents of the town. In Old Braintree the use of Common Lands for the pasturage of cattle seems to have been handled without problems serious enough to appear in the Town Records. As early as 1646, however, the Town Meeting voted that a man could take timber off the Common for his own use but not sell it out of town. In case any timber was sold out of town, the town would be paid 5 shillings per ton. In 1711 it was voted that no wood or stones should be taken for merchandise. In 1715, "no person shall dig nor carry off any stones from said common without license from the Committee." This regulation was repeated a number of times starting in 1727 with damages assessed against violators. In 1729 it was stated that the

removal of stone had been "done of late to great prejudice of the Town."

Strict regulations were in place and a price set for stone removed, when in 1749 John Hayward and John Hunt contracted to supply stone from the South Common and North Common respectively for the building of Kings Chapel in Boston. Ebenezer Miller later supplied the stone for the tower. A higher price was paid for the North Common granite which was used for the stonework that showed. The boulder stone was broken into pieces of transportable size and shipped by boat to a Boston wharf. It is interesting to note "that the Committee (of Kings Chapel) be not obliged to receive or pay for any Stones that the Masons refuse as unsuitable to the Work." Stonecutting here would not come until many years later. It is clearly seen that the high quality and easy availability of the North Common stone gave these town lands high value and presented

1. Historian, Quincy Historical Society

2. *Quincy's Granite Industries*, QUINCY HISTORY No. 23, Spring 1990

3. *Quincy's Granite Hills Were Golden*, QUINCY HISTORY, Spring 1980



control problems which the Town found difficult to meet. The large amount of stone that had been removed out of town for Kings Chapel caused particular concern for fear the townspeople would be deprived of this asset.

In 1753 it was decided to divide the common lands so that the benefits could be more evenly distributed. After much discussion as to how the lands would be divided, it was voted in the negative. At this time the price of stone removed was doubled. The next year it was voted that the Committee should lease lots of land, and a committee of inspectors appointed to see that the rules for removing stone and wood were adhered to. On the expiration of three-year leases in 1765, it was decided to sell the common lands by parcels to the highest bidders.

The North Common area in which the granite was located was divided into twelve lots, each to contain at least one spring. Fifteen acres was the most common size but some were as large as twenty-three acres. The first division of six lots was east of a line running generally from present Carroll's Lane to present Smith Street. The second division was six lots west of this line. Some of these original property lines persisted for many years.

The high bidders at the public sale and therefore the purchasers of the lots were local men who in most if not in all cases bought them as an investment income-producing property. A partnership of Benjamin Hayden, William Whitmarsh, James Faxon and John Vinton acquired a number of lots, selling most of their land fourteen years later to Jackson Field and Neddie Curtis. There was Benjamin Baxter, and Elijah Veazie who was a large holder. Peter B. Adams purchased the Rocky Pasture and sold it in 1779 to his brother the Hon. John Adams. Samuel Bass purchased about fifty acres that henceforth was known as Bass's Common. This southern part extended from present Granite and Copeland Streets north to near present Quarry Street. Samuel Bass and his heirs owned this land until 1871 when it was sold to Nathaniel F. Safford, the prominent real estate man who sold it

by small lots for development. There were few quarries in the Bass Common area.

Changes in ownership were not significant until after the real start of the quarrying industry in 1826. While the event that brought this about, namely the use and fashioning of West Quincy stone for the Bunker Hill Monument, the North Common too became a supplier of building stone on a large scale. The same year, 1826, that the Granite Railway was built to carry West Quincy stone to tidewater, the Quincy Canal Corporation was established to provide means for loading North Common stone on sloops and schooners. The Canal used the Town River from Town River Bay to near present Washington Street.

One land ownership became particularly significant. In 1787 when John Adams acquired the Old House on Adams Street from John Borland, the property included the Mt. Ararat Pasture from which present Mt. Ararat Road got its name. The fifty-four acres started at present Adams Street, the old Country Way, and extended into the North Common area. The Mt. Ararat Pasture was among the properties that John Adams gave to the people of Quincy when he established the Adams Temple and School Fund in 1822. In his deed, John Adams gave granite to the First Parish Church for rebuilding the Meeting House, and offered the same privilege to Christ Church. This was stone from the North Common indicating that John Adams used the property as a source of granite.

Whether or not it was the intent of John Adams, the Adams Temple and School Fund became one of the major owners of granite-producing property. From the records of the AT&SF we learn how they operated their granite properties, a practice that we can accept as applicable to other owners as well. At this time the stone taken was still boulders and increasingly stone cut from ledges. When a contractor wanted stone, he would pay a landowner for the privilege of removing an agreed-to number of cattle loads of stone. The precise meaning of the term "cattle load" is not known but it was probably an ox-cart load of a size understood by the parties involved. When true quarrying developed with requirements for buildings and other installations, the land owner would then lease a piece of property for a term of years to a quarry operator with the privilege of removing stone.

Among those who bought lots of land

from the early owners were men with an interest in granite; Henry Wood in 1805, William Packard, Barnabas White, Asa Pritchard, William and Charles Newcomb. In 1790 Thomas Greenleaf purchased property that remained in his family until 1880 when it was sold to Dr. William G. Pattee, the Quincy historian. The Patees retained it until after 1910. Other purchasers bought property for quarrying purposes: Richards & Munn in 1832, in 1835 the Gass family that operated a quarry and owned the property until 1918, the Hardwicks from 1835-1911, Frederick & Field in 1854, Dell & Biganess in 1871, and others.

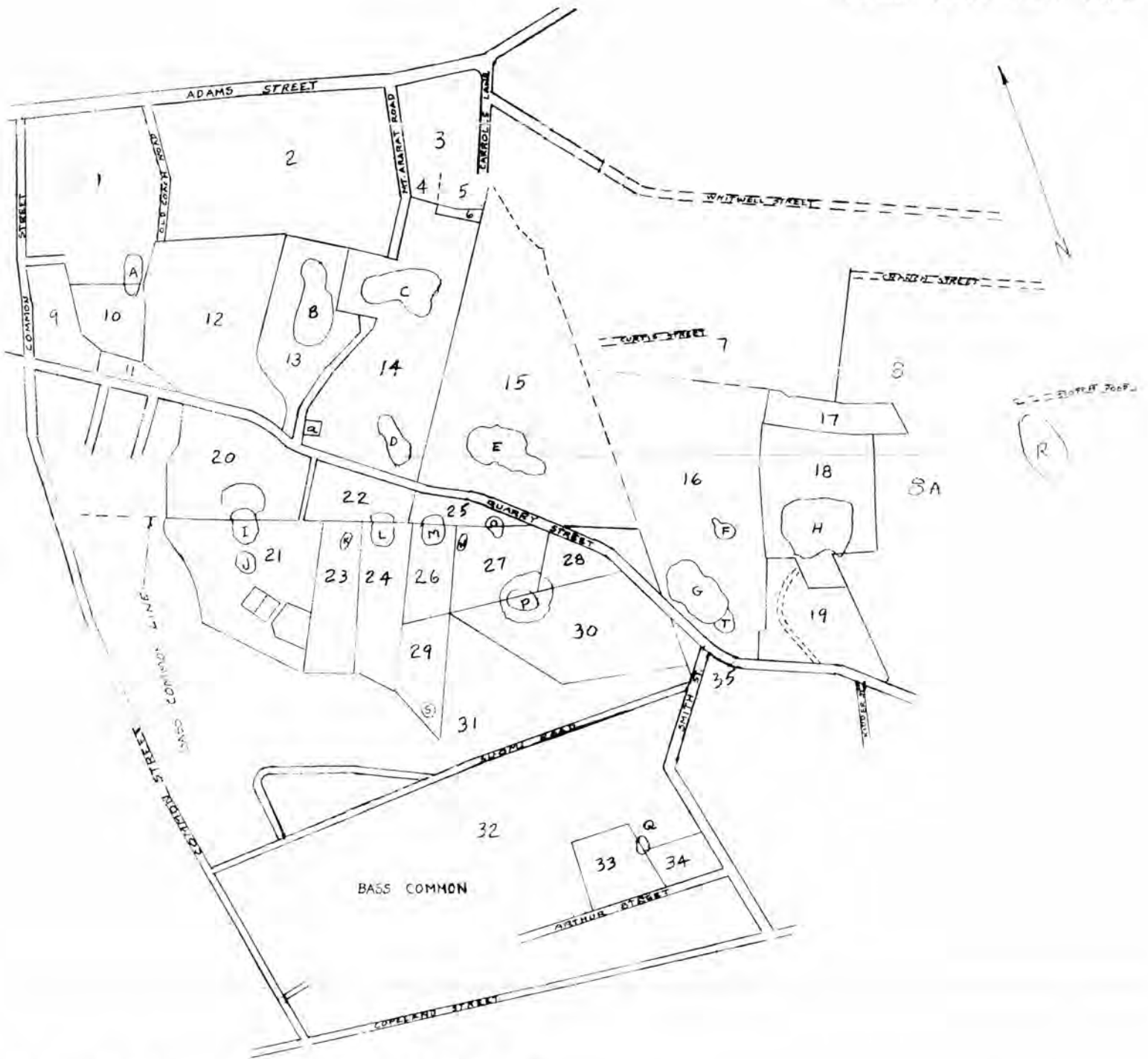
Most of the quarry operators came from outside of Quincy, as was the case of the workers as well. A notable exception was Charles H. Hardwick & Co. which operated an important quarry and shops for over seventy-five years. This business was associated with one of the most tragic events in Quincy's history. On July 29, 1910, Louis A. Restelli, a granite worker, equipped himself with two loaded hand guns and hired a horse and buggy. He first went to his mother's house on Trafford Street and shot her to death. He then drove to the granite shop of his two brothers where he killed a clerk and wounded others. His shooting spree then took him to the shops of Bishop Bros. and Deacon Bros. His final call was at Charles H. Hardwick & Co. when he murdered Henry E. Hardwick and wounded his brother C. Theodore Hardwick. Restelli then vanished and started a search that lead even to Vermont. On October 14th his body was found in the Merrymount Quarry closeby the Hardwick Quarry. It was concluded that hatred and debt had driven him insane.

Toward the end of the nineteenth century, a consortium of granite men was incorporated as the Quincy Granite Quarries Co. This company bought up almost all of the granite properties and leased them to the quarry operators, in most cases those who had been operating quarries. In 1904 the Quincy Granite Quarries Co. was taken over by the Quincy Quarries Co., a corporation of which Theophilus King, the Quincy banker was the principal officer. As the demand for Quincy granite declined, quarries closed their operation and the leases terminated. The company contracted for some filling and other uses of the properties, but gradually the properties ownership passed to the City of Quincy for taxes or through other arrangements. The quarries on the

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Land Study Plan of the North Common Quarry Area.

The numbers identify land parcels. The quarries are identified by letters. The quarries were known by the names of the operators and consequently some names kept changing.

- |                         |           |          |                |                      |              |       |
|-------------------------|-----------|----------|----------------|----------------------|--------------|-------|
| A. Shea                 |           |          |                | K.                   |              |       |
| B. Merrymount           |           |          |                | L. Fallon            |              |       |
| C. Craig & Richards     |           |          |                | M. New Fallon        |              |       |
| D.                      |           |          |                | N. Djerf             |              |       |
| E. Richards & Munn      | Greenleaf | Ballou   | Fegan & Ballou | O. Baby Hole         |              |       |
| F. Galvin               | Sahlsten  |          |                | P. Frederick & Field | Lower Fallon |       |
| G. Mitchell             | Hardwick  |          |                | Q. Pages             |              |       |
| H. McKenzie & Patterson | Falconer  |          |                | R. Field & Wild      |              |       |
| I. Churchill            | Hitchcock | Grossman |                | S. Djerf & Winquist  | Erickson     |       |
| J. Dell & Biganess      |           |          |                | T. Rock              | Winquist     | Helin |

north side of Quarry Street were the first to be filled. By 1947 all had been filled with municipal solid wastes, industrial solid wastes, and demolition materials. The quarries on the south side of Quarry Street were similarly filled a little later in time, the last to be filled being Djerf's Quarry about 1970. Needless to say, the filling was not controlled like today's sanitary landfills. The City has been gradually selling off the former quarry lands of the North Common area.

All of the twenty quarries noted on the map played a part in the history of Quincy and of the granite industry in the country. All contributed stone for important buildings and other structures for which Quincy granite was especially well known. In general it can be said that the North Common stone ran somewhat lighter in color than that from West Quincy which made it preferred for some uses. The famous dark and extra dark came from West Quincy only.

Probably the most famous quarry was Hitchcock. It was the deepest in the North Common area, and next to Swingle's in West Quincy, the deepest in Quincy. The land was owned by the Adams Temple and School Fund and leased to Amos Churchill and George H. Hitchcock. Subsequently it was owned by the Quincy Granite Quarries Co. and the Quincy Quarries Co. and leased to the operator. The Grossmans were the last operators of Hitchcock. They supplied the stone for the Memorial Monument on Mt. Greylock which was dedicated in 1933. The Dell & Biganess Quarry just to the south eventually became part of the Hitchcock operation. In 1948 the Losordos bought from the City the street portion of the Hitchcock lot including the powerhouse, and in 1969 the southern part including the filled quarry.

The Merrymount Granite Co. operated Merrymount Quarry for many years under lease from the Adams Temple and School Fund. The stone for the First Parish Church and the Adams Academy Building almost certainly came from this quarry. Hardwick Quarry already mentioned was operated by Richards, Munn & Co. starting in 1838, Mitchell Granite Co. in 1864, and Hardwick from 1868. Nearby was Patterson & McKenzie, later Falconer. The Fallon family operated Fallon Quarry, New Fallon, and Lower Fallon which had earlier been Frederick and Field. The Gass family owned and

operated an important quarry starting in 1835 and later leased the operation to Field & Wild.

For nearly three centuries, the granite removal activity in the North Common area was highly important to

Old Braintree and then the Town and City of Quincy. Today hardly a vestige of that activity remains. However, monuments to it stand all over the country, and its impact on Quincy will always remain. Today, new activities will open a new history for the area.

**APPRENTICESHIP**

In this time of emphasis on job training, the apprenticeship agreement in the Society's archives is of interest.

Asa Pope 1775-1858 was the posthumous son of Micajah Pope. He was a bootmaker in the 1850 Census and lived on Granite Street.

Seth Burrell 1766-1850, cordwainer, lived on Hancock Street near the corner of Washington Street.

**This Indenture Witnesseth,**  
That *Asa Pope Son of Sarah Pope of Braintree in the County of Suffolk in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts* widow

hath put himself, and by these Presents doth voluntarily, and of his own free Will and Accord, and with the Consent of his said *Mother* put and bind himself Apprentice to *Seth Burrell of Braintree aforesaid cordwainer* to learn his Art, Trade, or Mystery, and with him the said *Seth Burrell* after the Manner of an Apprentice to serve from the *Day of the Date hereof* for and during the term of *five years and four Days*

During all which Time or Term, the said Apprentice his said Master well and faithfully shall serve; his Secrets he shall keep clove, and his Commandments lawful and honest every where he shall gladly obey; he shall do no Damage to his said Master nor suffer it to be done by others, without letting or giving reasonable Notice thereof to his said Master he shall not waste the Goods of his said Master nor lend them unlawfully to any; at Cards, Dice, or any other unlawful Game or Games, he shall not play; Fornication he shall not commit; Matrimony with any Person during the said Term he shall not contract; Taverns, Ale-Houses, or Places of Gaming he shall not haunt or frequent; From the Service of his said Master by Day nor Night he shall not absent himself; but in all Things and at all Times he shall carry and behave himself towards his said Master and all others, as a good and faithful Apprentice ought to do, during all the Time or Term aforesaid.

AND the said *Seth Burrell* for himself doth hereby Covenant and Promise to teach and instruct, or cause the said Apprentice to be instructed in the Art, Trade or Calling of a *Cordwainer* by the best Way or Means that he may or can (if said Apprentice be capable to learn) and to find and provide unto said Apprentice good and sufficient *Victuals Drink Cloathing washing and Lodging in health and in sickness*

during the said Term; and at the Expiration thereof shall give unto the said Apprentice *two good Sutes of App Cloathing for all parts of his Body as is Customary for such an apprentice*

IN Testimony whereof, the said Parties have to these Indentures interchangeably set their Hands and Seals, the *twenty fourth Day of October*, in the Year of our LORD One Thousand Seven Hundred and *Sixty one*

Signed, Sealed and Delivered in Presence of

*Joseph Trurrell junor Seth Burrell David Porter*