

stonexus

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Photo: A. Plumbutt

COVER AND FACING PAGE IMAGES:

These thespian masks of Tragedy and Comedy adorn the façade of a building (not a theatre, surprisingly) in the old town of Wroclaw, Lower Silesia, Poland. They were carved the very early 20th century.

Photos: Juliet Golden

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twelve sided stone

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stone (ston) n.

1. a. Concreted earthy or mineral matter; rock.
b. Such concreted matter of a particular type.
Often used in combination.
2. A small piece of rock.
3. Rock or piece of rock shaped or finished for a particular purpose, especially a piece of rock that is used in construction.

nex-us (nek' sas) n., pl. nexus or nex-us-es.

1. A means of connection; a link or tie.
2. A connected series or group.
3. The core or center.

mag-a-zine (mag-úh-zeen), n.

1. A periodical containing a collection of articles, stories, pictures, or other features



photos to the editor



C.L.

The harbor, Valletta, Malta



S.A.

The two photographs by Sean Adcock are from an article on Malta that he is writing for the next issue.



S.A.

City Hall, St Louis MO



B.K.

Cathedral of St. John the Divine, NYC



T.S.

Wall, South Kent, CT



J.M.



Anon

Salamanca, Spain

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Anon

Cleveland Heights, OH



C.O.

Mexico, beach rocks + dry stone waller on vacation = cairn



M.M.

Champlain Stone Field office, NY



R.H.

Wall, detail, Atlanta, GA
Bobblerocks, Amherst, MA

Flooring with a fertility theme, Japan



C.C.



J.S.

Stone Rising:

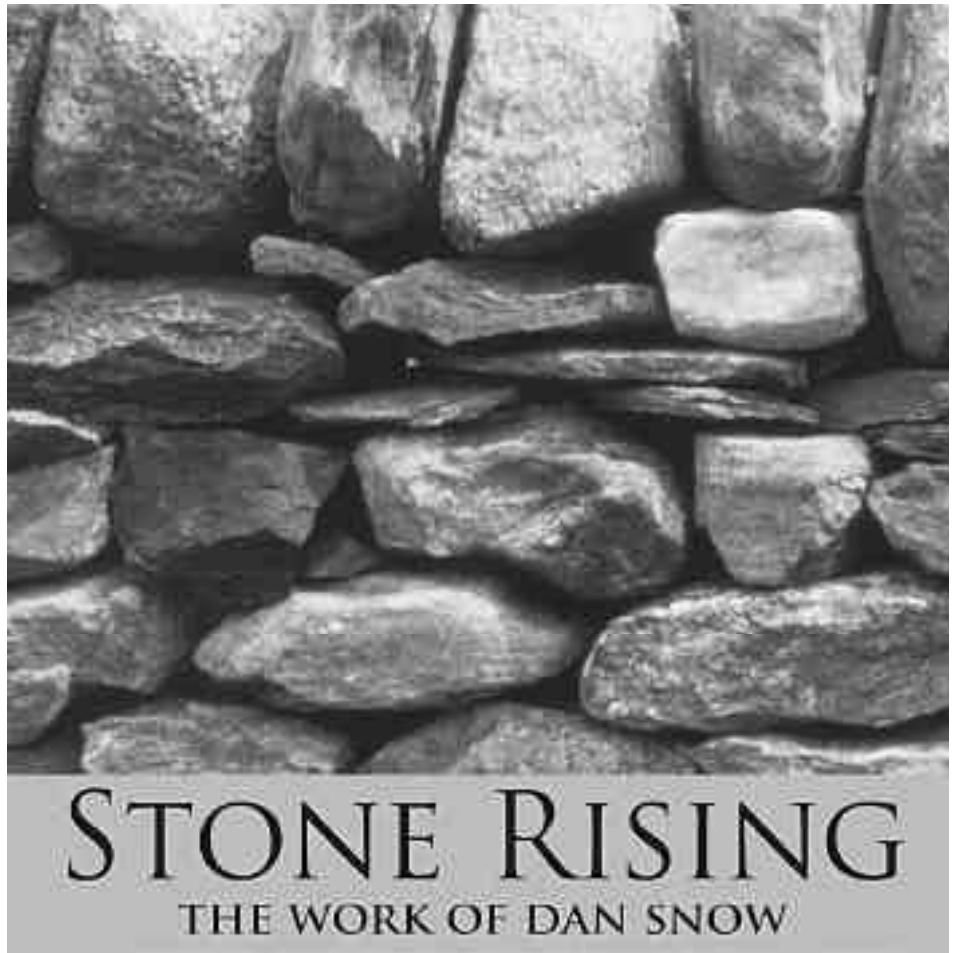
A film about the work of Vermont stone waller, Dan Snow

Dan Snow has been building stonewalls along the roads and fields of southern Vermont for thirty years. His work has been the subject of articles in numerous publications including *The New York Times*, *The Boston Globe*, *This Old House* and *Garden Design*. In STONEXUS II, we reviewed *In the Company of Stone*, the book he authored (with photography by Peter Mauss). Now, for the first time, Snow's stunning work is explored through the moving image. A one hour video, *Stone Rising: The Work of Dan Snow* by Burlington, Vermont filmmaker Camilla Rockwell, will soon be seen in venues around the state.

When her husband received a copy of Snow's book as a gift, Rockwell found herself returning to it again and again, drawn by the depth of the waller's devotion to his craft. She and her crew spent eighteen months gathering digital video footage of Snow's work in every season and conducting interviews with Dan and his longtime customers and associates.

Rockwell quickly understood that she was not being allowed into Snow's world lightly: "Dan relishes his privacy and works to the accompaniment of his thoughts and the sounds of nature." She first imagined a brief meditative piece documenting the design and construction of a single project but soon discovered that Snow rarely works on one project at a time and his larger endeavors may extend through multiple seasons. Finding that his clients—many artists themselves—spoke with such insight, humor and deep respect for Dan, she decided to include their voices and expand the program to an hour.

"Dan says that when he writes, he never worries that he will be able to find what he needs," says Rockwell. "Building stone walls, he's learned that the right stone when he's walling—and the right word when he's writing—will be there when he needs it. That's the approach I learned to take with this project." What unfolded was an introduction to Dan's creative process: his practical considerations in building with natural stone, the daily challenges of working in nature and his playful experiments in collaboration—all of which Rockwell shares in scenes that shift seamlessly between seasons. The appeal of the program, Rockwell finds, is widespread. Not only are artists and craftsmen drawn to Snow's work, she says, but "all of us seem to carry an innate attraction to the power and beauty of



stone. Everyone has a story about the place of stone in their lives."

Some of Rockwell's favorite stories about Snow's work in *StoneRising* are told by Archie and Win Clarke, excavators from Newfane who are always on the lookout for stone that might interest Dan for his unique projects. Usually busy digging cellar holes and septic systems, they respond enthusiastically whenever Dan calls for their services. Working with him, they say, has not only helped them look at stone anew but inspired them to create their own stone and landscaping projects.

Snow's own inspiration often comes from his travels in Europe. Many of his recent projects look as if they've been standing for hundreds of years. He seems almost egoless about his work, preferring to focus on his appreciation for the gardens people plant around it and his gratitude for being able to do what he loves. Dry stone is a medium guaranteed to undergo constant change caused by the seasons and Snow delights in the mystery and surprise that result. Often reclaiming stones from derelict walls, he envisions the material in his work being used in the creations of a future generation. "I like the idea," he smiles, "that it just keeps being passed along."

Stone Rising is due to air on Vermont Public Television in 2005 and will be available on VHS and DVD. Copies may be ordered through Rockwell's website: fuzzyslippersproductions.com.





THE STONE CARVER'S IMAGINATION

(4 of 9 pages)

by Tadeusz Włodarczak and Juliet Golden

photos: Juliet Golden



Stone carver green man and his trusty tools: Is this a self-portrait?

IN THE SCOPE OF THE PYRAMIDS,

Mt. Rushmore, Stonehenge or even Michelangelo's *Pieta*, green men are incidents and details. But for me, these small anti-masterpieces scattered around the world come the closest to connecting us with our individual brother stonemason at work centuries ago building the temples, cathedrals, administrative buildings and even tombs revered today as classics of ancient and not so ancient architecture. Green men, or more generically mascarons, give us insight into the nature of architecture, but also the nature of the stonemason's job and the artistic license he employed at work.

I refer to them as anti-masterpieces because at most green men denote "flaunty ornamentation" dwarfed in the contexts of some monumental construction. These evocative pieces of a human scale are sort of free form improvisations; something like a cadenza in classical concerto, a moment when the orchestra stops playing and the soloist is set free from the strictures of the composition to invent music in a fit of creative expression without a strict, regular beat.

Traditionally, green men appear as ornaments at crucial points in a building: in brackets, roof bosses, capitals, column bases, etc. They proved useful as a motif because they were incredibly adaptable when employed to cover up "blemishes" in structures, such as at the intersection of ribs, groins, beams or at key points in a flying buttress. It was at these points in a structure that a stonemason

could "let it rip." At their best, green men are expressions of individual carvers' imaginations and the incarnations of their fears and hopes; their deities and demons. In green men we see what made the carver laugh and what made him cower. In the context of an edifice as a whole, green man became either visible focal points commanding attention or they could be hidden way, like a small witty "bonus." Regardless, these stones pique the onlooker's curiosity, inviting them to stop and wonder.

In contrast to the generic mascarons, which is the complete or partial representation of the human face or head, the green man (and very rarely, the green woman) is a face composed of, or peering out from foliage. The origins of the green man can be found in Roman art starting in the second half of the first century AD, according to Kathleen Basford in her seminal work *The Green Man*, published for the first time in 1978. She writes that some even described the motif as a male medusa. But these ancient works were manifestations of a pantheon of Roman gods. For me, the green men we revere today came out of the vast forests of northern Europe and they represent the taming of the fears that fertilized human imagination.

In Central Europe at least, the nineteenth century witnessed a resurgence in the popularity of the green men and their seculariza-

This green man supports a bay window.



tion. Their ubiquity and the vast diversity of forms and styles reflect not only a fascination with the ancient world, but also a belief in the power of science and progress. Green men suddenly take on attributes of the ancient god's like Hermes, or gaze out from façades with the frozen theatrical expressions of Greek thespians. But despite their classic motifs, these are "greenhouse" green men, very much grounded in the industrial revolution. Their leaves are exotic, and architects and artists alike seemed to have reached for inspiration from voyages around the world or trips to the botanical gardens.

Depending on the geographic location and specific building

traditions, green men can be anything from profoundly beautiful to down right ugly and disturbing. Sometimes they smile benevolently, but most of the time they glare down at us in a threatening, menacing manner.

The best green men are carved in a "laid back" sort of way, but they exude life. They don't have to have faces, in the strictest of senses, but they have facial expressions. The leaves can be arranged so that the green man smiles; and the best smile is a secretive one that fits any occasion. The more enigmatic and ambiguous the expression, the more appealing the piece will be.



The creator of this green man must have been influenced by the Italian painter Archimboldo.



Lesna zoo

Unusual for Central Europe is this late-renaissance green man with the plant sprouting from his mouth.



This green man on the facade of the Exchange Building serves as a springing stone for two arches. (Wroclaw, Poland)



A strangely Oriental green man



This is one of several green men that flank the statue of Holy Mary on the main entrance of the cathedral in Wroclaw, Poland.



Green man squashed under a flying buttress:
The pressure of his job made this green man lose most of his leaves and caused his eyes to bulge.

stonecdote

(anecdote: a short personal account of an interesting or humorous incident. stonecdote: an anecdote about stone.)

It is my wish to encourage the sharing of stories much as we would do in each other's company. Here's a light-hearted reminiscence of my own. Imagine if you will that we are down at the pub, in this case the Second Street Brewery in Santa Fe. I recommend Rod's Best Bitter, though you may prefer the hoppy, high gravity, medal-winning IPA.

So—remember the photo in the last STONEXUS of the stone columns and the merry masons who built them? Well, that was taken on a pleasant spring day in 1980, just after the final cleanup had taken place. The actual work was done in quite different conditions, during one of the wettest winters on record, in a place noted for wet winters, Marin County, California.

They grace the entrance to what had been the old Kent Estate in Kentfield, an up-scale community nestled in a moist armpit of Mt. Tamalpais, a geographical entity locally referred to as the "Sleeping Woman" because of its silhouette against the sky. Recently purchased by a German baron, the estate was in the process of being baronialized. Stately stone entry columns were *de rigueur* and I was asked to bid on them. After looking at the plans, I deliberated for a full minute and then drew the numeral six in the air. "Six?" "Right." "Thousand?" "Right." That was considered—and rejected; they would prefer doing time and materials. Okay by me.

It was an interesting design, each column was to be square in cross-section, inside and back faces to be plumb, front and outside faces, sloping. Basalt fieldstone augmented with sandstone. Lanterns. The MO: ample foundations (this is earthquake country), each containing a flattened spheroid of rebar gathered in a cluster, like the stem of an onion, around the electrical conduit (for the lanterns) extending up the center of the column-to-be. The stone would be laid up properly, the mortar recessed, the core filled with scrap rock and concrete. NO cement blocks. The crew was a trio, myself, Michel a French mason and George, our apprentice.

So we commenced work, established the foundations and began to build. The columns slowly grew as we soldiered through the unfavorable weather and battled the bastardly obdurate tool-steel-eating basalt boulders. Occasionally the good Baron would visit the estate to observe the proceedings, bestowing a genial wave to us from the rear of his chauffeured car as he passed by. In sardonic observance of ancient custom, we would bare our heads. The rain continued; the cold was constant; the work went on. Conditions were so miserable we had to laugh. The hot, hearty meals with red wine at the Italian restaurant we favored for lunch helped, as did the opera and jazz music we played at high volume while we worked. Michel and George began talking with Italian accents whereas I adapted an Irish brogue believing it more appropriate to the atmospheric conditions. In these ways we kept our spirits up.

The six thousand dollar mark came, and went, but the columns had yet to attain their full height. Every day dozens of other tradesmen, carpenters, electricians, plumbers, painters etc. passed though our worksite going to and from their own jobs inside and under cover. Quite possibly they were the source of a growing suspicion that the good Baron was being milked by the loony stonemasons.

The situation was complicated because the general contractor had been seriously injured in an automobile accident and was hospitalized. The architect was out of the country. The Baron now seemed worried as he gazed on the columns in passing—but what was he to do? A baron can't speak to a workingman, especially about such matters. But somebody had to; that somebody turned out to be the realtor who had negotiated the property transfer. He volunteered to rectify the situation, to take matters in hand and bring the unruly stonemasons into line.

So, one typically not-so-fine day a Mercedes sedan drove up, stopped and out stepped a person resembling the actor Victor Mature. Dark and handsome was he, self-assured, impeccably dressed and richly ornamented with gold. His manner was suave but commanding as with firm tones he informed us that, having exceeded the original benchmark figure of six thousand dollars, we had been paid more than we actually deserved and that we should finish the remaining work expeditiously—and without further remuneration.

You know how after something happens, sometimes just after, more often long after, it occurs to you what you should've said, what you should've done? But occasionally, just occasionally, we actually do say what we should've said and do what we should've done; well, this was such a time.

"Perhaps" I said, picking up a hefty stone, 50 or 60 pounds of dense geological material, "you don't understand what we're dealing with here." I thrust the rock toward him and, when he put out his arms in self-defense, released the heavy, wet, muddy object onto them. Realtor, meet Reality. The fact of the act and the weight of the stone astonished him and he was obliged to embrace it to protect his expensively shod feet. After watching him dance around with this for a moment or two I relieved him of it. Aghast is the best way to describe the way he regarded his hands, his suit and shirt, the stone and me. The manner of his leave-taking was abrupt. He never returned.

Working at our accustomed pace we finished the columns and as a gesture of good will, made a fair adjustment to the bill.

T.L.

THE CRIMEA: SCYTHIAN/GREEK DUALISM

THE SCLOTAI were an Indo-European people made up of marauding tribes of horse-mounted archers whose range extended, over time, from Mongolia in the east to the Baltic and North Sea coasts in the west, an area as vast as North America. Scythian or Scythae is a Greek word for certain of these tribes, those that came to inhabit a particular region north of the Black Sea: the steppe between the Carpathian Mountains and the River Don - and the Crimean Peninsula.

Among the first people to domesticate the horse, their livelihood initially depended on pasturing and hunting, but this was altered when, in the 7th century BC, they came to inhabit the regions described above. These were originally settled by a people known as the Cimmerii, from which the name Crimea derives. The Cimmerii were displaced, assimilated, or both, by the Scythian influx. The area on both sides of the strait between the Sea of Azov and the Black Sea was being colonized from Greece at about the same time and the Scythian imagination was intrigued by Hellenic culture.

The Greek historian, Herodotus, identified three Scythian clans, the Ploughman, or agrarian Scythians, the Nomad Scythians and the Royal Scythians. The latter concentrated around present-day Kerch in the eastern tip of the Crimean Peninsula, an area they shared with Greek colonists whose civilized lifestyle, mythology, and art they respected and came to adopt. Herodotus focused considerable attention on the Scythians and from him we have learned that they were a people both savage and sensitive. They drank fermented mare's milk or, like their Greek neighbors, wine from vessels made from the skulls of slain enemies. They had a passion for gold and Scythian artisans crafted objects with it that still have the power to astound us. They valued the hemp plant, made fabrics as fine as linen from it and appreciated its



psychotropic qualities. They were not only fierce in war, but also clever; their strategy of not engaging the mighty invading army of Darius, the king of Persia, in pitched battle, but to harass and lead it deeper into inhospitable territory might have served as an example to the Russians when invaded by Napoleon and Hitler (though Darius escaped with his force intact).

The region is dotted with tumuli containing Scythian and Greek tombs. These are remarkably similar in style and, rather than expressing ethnic distinctions between the cultures, constitute a style of mortuary architecture common to both and distinctive of the region. They relate to similar burial mounds in Greece and Asia Minor and, some infer, reflect the influence of the pyramids of Dynastic Egypt.

This tomb is officially known as the Royal Mound, although, for some reason, the local people refer to it as *вѣджайнѣ* or the vagina. The quality of the masonry work is exceptionally fine. The *dromos* or entry passage shown here is 30 feet high and 72 feet deep. The carefully hewn sandstone blocks were laid without mortar to create a tall, narrow, corbelled vault leading

to the burial chamber. To the Scythians the arrowhead was a revered form and, one might conjecture, could have had an influence on the design. This construction was then covered with a layered barrow; a rubble stone vaulting was laid over the cut stone and was covered with several alternating layers of clay and seaweed, more rubble stone and, finally, earth, creating a tumulus nearly 60 feet in height.

It is dated to the 4th Century BC and was evidently the final resting place of a Bosporan king, possibly Levkon the First, under whose reign the realm reached its apex of power, wealth, and influence.

T.L.

Sources:

Herodotus, "The Histories"

Ellis Hovell Minns, "Scythia" Encyclopedia Britannica, 11th edition

Friederike Fless, "The Necropolis of Pantikapaion (Kerch, Crimea)"

Krzysztof Ciuk, "Gold of the Nomads"

W. Edmund Filmer, "Our Scythian Ancestors"

Dr. Viktor Zinko, "A Walk Through Ancient Kerch"



PANTICAPAEUM was an ancient Greek colony founded in the early 6th century BC at the site of present-day Kerch, in the Crimea. Strategically located on the western shore of Kerch Strait, the city grew quickly; before the end of the century it was minting its own coins. As the leading trade, manufacturing, and cultural center on the northern coast of the Black Sea, it became the capital of the Bosphoran Kingdom, which arose in the 5th century. It was heavily damaged in Saumacus' revolt and Diophantus' capture of the city at the

end of the 2nd century BC and by an earthquake ca 70 BC. Panticapaeum was rebuilt under Roman rule, and by the 1st century AD had regained its commercial importance. It began to decline in the 3rd century as tribal raids disrupted the trade in the Black Sea and the Mediterranean Basin. Panticapaeum was destroyed by the Huns ca 370. Later a small town arose at the site, which in the Middle Ages became known as Bosphorus.

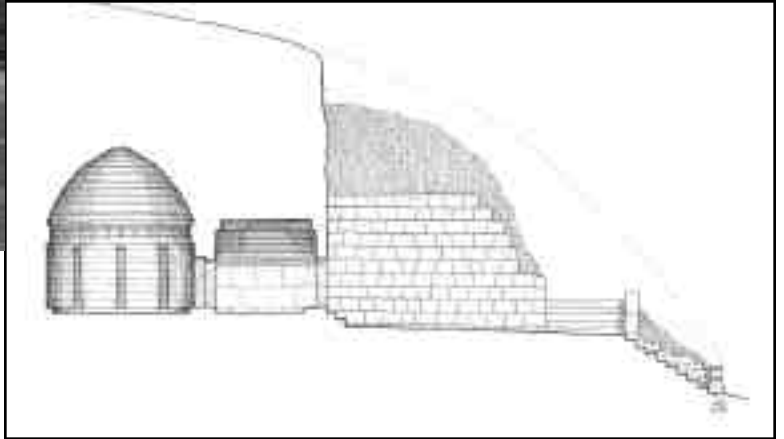
The city was dominated by Mount Mithridates, on which the temples and civic

buildings were placed. The slopes were terraced and covered with private villas. The large bay provided an excellent port. At its apogee the city occupied approximately 100 hectares. Beyond the city walls was a large necropolis, which has been excavated since the end of the 19th century. It included a number of famous kurgans (burial mounds), such as Melek-Chesmen kurgan, Tsarskyi kurgan, Zolota Mohyla, and Yuz Oba. The city itself has been excavated systematically since the Second World War.

Source: Encyclopedia of Ukraine



photos: Julie Kandyba



STONE SLEUTHING IN SLAVIC REALMS

(1 of 2 pages)

By Edward Monroe

CHETINYOVA MOGILA, an impressive Thracian shrine formed in the shape of a hill, sits 100 miles southeast of Sofia outside of the town Starosel, Bulgaria. The mogila has a grand view of the Pyasuchnik River Valley and is clearly the effort of a powerful king. Some suggest it is the final resting place of Sitalkes, who during his brief life of twenty years extended the Thracian empire from the Danube River to the Aegean Sea. The historical details are uncertain, yet the magnificent dry stone construction remains in good shape after 2,400 years of wear.

My intent in visiting the Chetinyova Mogila was to approach its mysteries from a geologic perspective. On first notice, I was impressed with the technical knowledge and workmanship that were required to construct it. Approximately 300 stone blocks of decorative granite were used in the outer wall surrounding the earthen dome, the central staircase, and the hallway leading into the inner chambers. At roughly 250 kilograms each, the total weight of stone for the exterior construction equals 75 metric tons or 165,000 lbs. As I admired the exterior work, one question loomed in my mind: where is the quarry for the granite stone blocks? Local stone seemed to be the obvious answer.

With two colleagues, I identified the stone found along hillside road cuts and in quarries behind the shrine, but it was not the same. The local granites had a visibly light mineral texture, referred to as leucogranites. On the other hand, the mogila granite had a darker mineral texture, a greater content of the mineral plagioclase, and large pink crystals (phenocrysts) of alkali feldspar up to 1.5 inches in length to 0.5 inches in width. Based on these features, the mogila granite is described as a porphyritic granodiorite with large phenocrysts of pink alkali feldspar.

In the stone trade, the mogila stone material is simply referred to as granite. To find its source more field research was required. There

is a saying that if you want to know the local geology - look to the walls of the towns. Working on this assumption, we continued our fieldwork along the outskirts of Starosel. We happened across chunks of the mogila granite haphazardly stacked in a yard, readied for the construction of a fence. Neighbors told us it was from the local quarries, the owner did as well, but it was clearly not so.

When the neighbors had left, we stayed on to talk with the owner. Eventually he told us the stone had been taken from the remains of a farm storage building, not far away. Following his directions down a muddied road, we found the building. Its wall piers had been constructed with the same granite used in the mogila. The building had been raised during the communist period that ended in 1989 AD. The mogila was built in the later half of the 4th century BC and only recently unearthed in 2000 AD.





A STROLL THROUGH AN OLD GRAVEYARD

(2 of 4 pages)

Just a few blocks from the Old Charleston Jailyard, now the American College of the Building Arts, where the stonemasonry and stonecarving workshops (pp. 63-67) took place last November is the Unitarian Church (established 1780) and its cemetery. Not surprisingly several of the stone carvers gravitated there and one of them, Pete Bracken, took several photographs. Probably others did too, but he sent his to me. Thanks, Pete, for the opportunity to show these fine examples of the craft.





CITY OF THE DEAD

(2 of 4 pages)

from *A Stonemason's Journal*

The old cemetery stands just outside of town; crumbling walls and disheveled crypts lie scattered about under majestic palms and live oaks; they poke through the overgrowth of like the toothy grin of a old prizefighter.

Unkempt paths of white oyster shell meander aimlessly, revealing bends and dead-ends, swallowed by spooky hillocks harboring statuary, ruined angels with blighted faces pointing heavenwards reminding the faithful of their promised rewards. Mongrel dogs prowl these paths and wild cats scurry about.

In its day this was a proud necropolis of Victorian splendor dressed in the best marble and wrought iron. It was approached with decorum by stately black hearses drawn by horses, their black plumes swaying. These wheeled catafalques were elegantly appointed and often, like the coffins, glass enclosed, displaying the facial features of the deceased in the light of their last day above the earth. A procession of carriages of the finest craftsmanship followed bringing the bereaved and their dead together for the final parting.

Here lie the famous, the infamous and the forgotten; the great and the not-so-great; the wise and the foolish; Christian and Jew; slave and master; men and women, and children; so many children were interred there in small white coffins, their places marked by lambs. Their adult counterparts received well-carved tablets and columns in intricate detail.

In time, to the city of the dead they all came.

THE BRIGHT GULF COAST SUN

shines directly overhead. We are just outside the city of Mobile, Alabama, in its historic old Magnolia Cemetery. The air is perfumed and humid, laden with the stench of rotten vegetation. We are working here repairing the crypts that have collapsed and those that are about to.

I recall one crypt that we entered and knelt on stone slab from which a staircase descended into the darkness. Below us, the dead were all arranged like sleepers in a elegant stone Pullman car. Their coffins, nearly rotted away, were revealed in the beam of light thrown from our head-lamps; the bric-a-brac of the funerary hardware lay among their bones in an orderly scatter. Someone dislodged a small stone and it fell into the depths of the crypt, surprising us with the sound of a splash and the sight of a ripple spreading across our view. The crypt was half full of water, crystal-clear water, ten feet deep.

There are some 10,000 people accounted for here, but ground-penetrating radar indicates a possible 30,000 internments. This is not surprising. The French were here before the Americans, and before the French there were the Spanish, and before them were pirates and corsairs all fighting for a little place to "wet their beak" as Don Corleone was fond to say.

We kept running into bodies buried where they should not be; buried in roads, buried under walls, under walkways. By law we are supposed to notify the coroner to confirm the burial is not recent. This as a matter of formality, usually an occasion when the coroner, a less than savvy political appointee, jumps down into the hole

with us and politely asks "What do you think?"

When we assure him of the antiquity of the remains he stands and announces to those peering down that it is okay to proceed.

After one such occasion an old, black spinster lady stepped forward from the lingering crowd and informed us that, in the 19th century, a family's beloved servants and slaves were, by mutual desire, interned in this way on family plots, so that in death, as in life, they could all be together as family in the "big house".

SPRING EQUINOX

The air sparkles. The sky is the single facet of a blue diamond. The sun pulsates and warms the Gulf, its glare dispersed by the swaying palms into myriad beams that dance lightly over fallen white grave stones.

Two black gravediggers, visible only from the waist up, their sweat-laden backs glistening like wet ebony in the morning light, are at work in the graves. They labor in tandem and their faces reflect the steadfastness and resoluteness of their grim work. Pick and dig, and pick, and dig.

The muffled sound harmonizes with the songbird's serenade and fat worms dance in the moist earth. At about 5 feet they hit what they were looking for and call me over from the chain-fall I was working on. Through the light rimmed opening in the collapsed brick vaulting we were peering into a hole in the earth. "Have we got it?" I asked, and just then a white mist of dust and damp, fetid air was exhaled from the hole in a lazy updraft. That startles us. "It's all yours, Boss-man," I'm told and they quickly clamber from the mouth of the

grave.

The dead affect people in different ways. To some it is an unexplainable psychosis; to others, merely macabre. To these gentlemen it is a combination of superstition and fear. I respect that; after all, we have a long time ahead of being dead and this is no time to start the process early.

As the Boss-man, I check my rig and give a few more pulls to the chain fall, steadying the thousand pound stone monument the base of which is dangling dangerously halfway over the hole that we have just dug.

The lifting straps bite hard and the monument holds, but I could see that the terrain under the base is eroding away like sand in an hourglass. There isn't much time to work before the earth collapses and the stone, the chain-fall and Boss-man all topple into the hole. Maybe an hour, maybe only twenty minutes; we have to work and work fast. I need more help; grave diggers aren't masons.

A FEW DAYS AGO

I had a local bricklayer who was working with me, but the night before we started this work we were drinking dockside in a bayou saloon along the Dog river that was full of oil-drillers, shrimp fishermen and sweet drawling women in tight shorts who leaned over too far when they talked to you.

He was a taciturn man with the scars and tattoos of a war veteran and we having a second round when he told me, "I don't work tombs."

The announcement startled me. I felt abandoned; I couldn't do this job alone. I felt that I deserved to know why, but I did-

n't push him on the subject right away. A couple of shots of Jagermeister had a WD-40 like effect and loosened him up a little and he told me a grisly tale. Bars are trading posts of tales both tall and banal, but this one riveted my attention; so much so that I ceased to notice the view provided by the brunette bartender as she poured shots.

He was eight years old and he was playing in a graveyard late one afternoon and fell into a fresh cut grave that was half filled with water from a rain from the night before. His attempts at extricating himself were futile; the previous evening's rain had made the earth so slick that he slid back into the frigid October water with every effort to escape.

It was a dire situation. No one knew where he was. The graveyard was out of the way so no one could hear his shouts. It was late afternoon, nearly night and no one was likely to pass through the graveyard.

But he wasn't alone. Floating in the chest high water was the carcass of a dead white rabbit with frozen pink eyes that horrified him. Afraid to pick it up and throw it, the little boy pushed it away, but minutes later the dead bunny came floating back eyes open and staring at him.

Darkness fell and his cries for help were soon reduced to sobbing and whimpers. All night he spent largely submerged trying to keep his head above the dark frigid water. At times he became crazed with the fear that the sides were going to collapse in on him.

In the seemingly endless night he was sure he heard the voices of the dead talking to him, telling him to join them in sleep.

Then, looking me in the eye, he said that was tempting to do so, but it took every ounce of his young heart and mind not to succumb to that sleep.

The next day was the day of the funeral of the person in whose hole he was imprisoned. At nine a.m. the funeral party departed the church. A procession of mourners followed the black hearse with their lights on, slowing traffic to a stand still. The undertaker had sent his gravedigger crew ahead of the procession to make everything all right at the graveside. They found the boy there and pulled him out just as the hearse was arriving.

The funeral was delayed and an ambulance sent for. There was a lot of confusion when it arrived because to those just arriving at the rear of the procession it appeared that the ambulance was taking the body of the deceased away from the cemetery.



photo: Sheila Hagler

These mourners were baffled. What was happening? Had their loved one somehow revived?

The boy spent a week in the pediatric hospital for hypothermia and was held over for psychiatric observation, then released with an armful of stuffed animals -none of which were bunnies, by the way.

His story gripped me. Most guys would have spent the rest of their life in an asylum talking to walls, hearing the dead calling to him. He managed to survive, to become a brick craftsman, make an honest living and raise a family. He loved to lay brick, but not in graveyards.

As he spoke he was evaluating the sincerity of my attention. Victims who have suffered greatly need to feel support about what they have gone through. They have been pushed through the eye of the needle so to speak and their stories are a form of intimacy. Their candor is their bond with you, a gift not to be shared with just anybody, nor to be treated superficially. Their story is a symbol of their survival and deserving of respect. There are no high fives when you hear such things.

We stared at one another for awhile, then I quietly offered a toast a toast to the

living because the living are the recipients of second chances. The Jag tasted good. It rolled smoothly on the tongue and left it coated with pleasure.

We ordered another from the brunette with the bare midriff and the picturesque promontories, their attraction lost on us by now.

I told him that he wasn't alone in his feelings; that I understood from personal experience and his story brought back to me memories of my own brush with death. Talking about such things is difficult, but less so when you are with others who have been "there".

I was twenty years old and working as a driller in zinc mine a half-mile under the ground up near the border of Pennsylvania. We were working nights and this particular night was my birthday; I was going to be twenty-one.

We were working roof anchors on a vaulted ceiling that was fractured. On or about 3 o'clock in the morning (the exact time of my birth) our heavy drilling must have hit something that dislodged the whole roof puzzle and over 20 tons of rock came down on us.

reprint

THE ART OF WORK

Stone Wallers Display Their Timeworn Craft at the National Gallery, Washington, DC

(1 of 3 pages)



Steven Allen, a champion dry stone waller in Great Britain, shapes some slate at the National Gallery for Andy Goldsworthy's sculpture "Roof."

ALL DAY LONG the wallers do their heavy labor. They hump their slabs of slate, and break the stone with hammers, and set it into stacks, and tomorrow in the morning they'll start doing it again. This turns out to be beautiful. Of all the sights on offer now at the National Gallery of Art few are more beguiling than standing at the window watching the wallers work.

Like the sculpture they're constructing — "Roof" by Andy Goldsworthy — the wallers at their walling make your thoughts go round and round.

"Roof" is the largest work of art commissioned by the gallery in a quarter-century. Its designer is an art star who, unusual for art stars, is as much admired by the broad art public as he is by the pros. The English wallers he has hired to build his dry stone sculpture are more than mere assistants. "Roof" pays homage to their muscles, their steadfastness, their history. To watch them is to know that they are core to what it is.

You think: This is oldest toil, old as a chipped hand-ax, old as Stonehenge, old as Clovis points, old as toil gets.

You think: Bad backs and squashed thumbs, black blood underneath the nail. Prisons once assigned work like this to convicts. Yet here in the East Building walling feels transcendent — as prideful in its craft, as stately in its rhythms, as resonant with references — as fine art is supposed to be, but only seldom is.

A glimpse is not enough. This takes observing slowly. Wander off a while, have a cup of coffee, take a look at Rembrandt. You have to let the hours flow to watch the stone form rising, and read the evocations that swirl around the scene.

Skills like these were common once. Not anymore. How long did it take to breed the Highland sheepdog, or evolve the Viking long-boat? Walling has that slowness deep within its pedigree. It, too, is a dying art. The wallers keep on working. The clouds of dust their boots disturb are gray as shreds of mist on rain-soaked British hills.

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THE MARBLE MOUNTAINS

(2 of 15 pages)

By Edwin B. Child

ILLUSTRATIONS BY THE AUTHOR

"GOIN' to shoot in there. Got about twenty or thirty holes we've got to fire." It was a tall, gaunt Yankee overseer in a mountain marble quarry, and I was asking what the unusual look of things meant. I had hung around this and other quarries for days at a time, and this day was different. The noisy clank of cutters and drills was stilled, and a number of machines had been loaded on cars where the skewy track came elbowing out of the quarry pit, giving somewhat the look of a May moving.

"You ain't goin' to touch 'em all, air ye, Ed?" queried the Blacksmith, who, like all native Yankee quarrymen, always calls the foreman familiarly by his first name, abbreviated. "Got eighteen filled, and I can touch nine. If the other feller's as good as I be, we'll git 'em."

"Guess the fust 'll come pretty near bein' warm before you git round," said the Blacksmith with a grin.

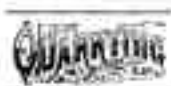
"Ed" looked at him dryly. "Once I touched twenty-two and a 'cotton' alone." A grim twinkle came into a corner of his near eye, and he spit with precision at a chunk of marble. "The fust one was pretty nigh burnt when I touched the last, and I wa'n't a hell of a ways out of the quarry when they begun to pop." And he stalked away around a pile of refuse marble—"refuge," Sim Jenkins called it—to another part of the quarry.

So I learned that they were about to blast away a layer of stone that covered a lower pocket of marble in a part of the pit hidden by the buttressed entrance. Before I got in sight of the men who were tamping

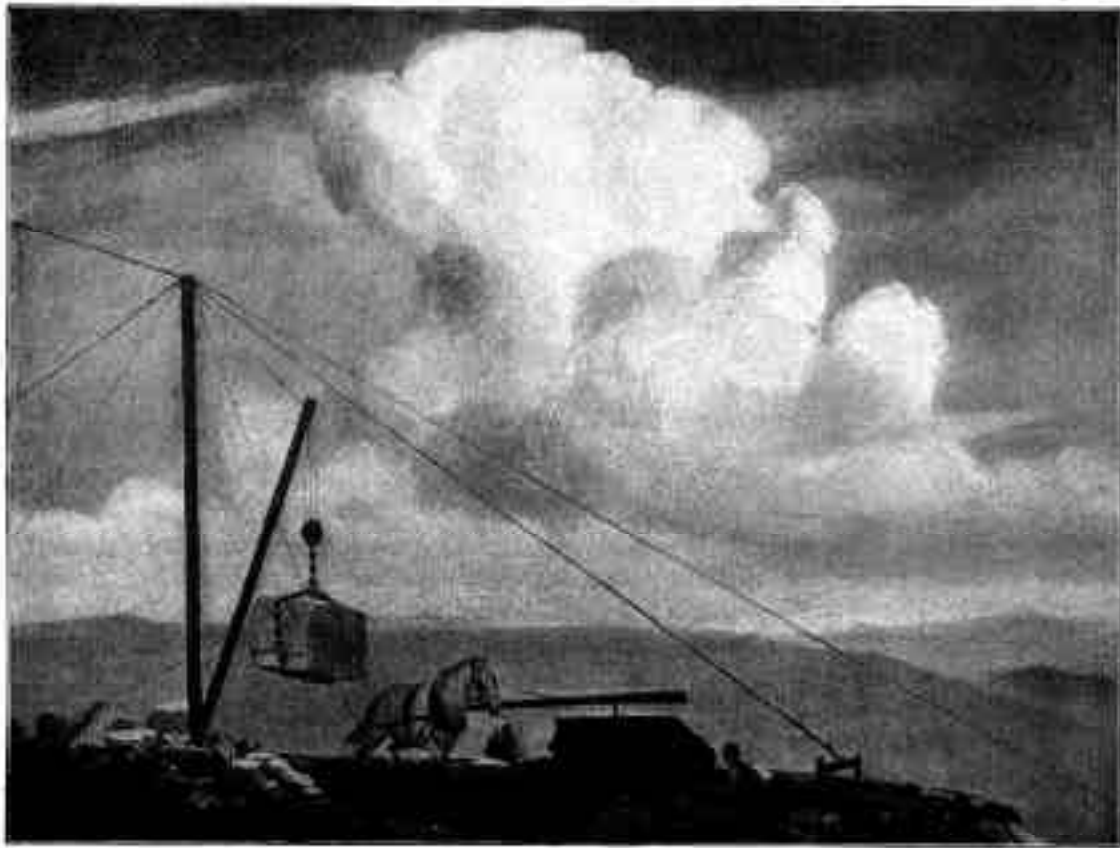
in the charges there came a sudden sharp explosion, followed by somewhat involved diaconal oaths that belong to Vermonters, and back around the turn came the overseer, running with ashy face, followed by other men, fearful of a premature explosion. Luckily no harm was done, though it had been a close call for young Abe Slocum, lately graduated from water-boy to helper. The scare made "Ed" reminiscent.

"No, nobody ever got hurt blastin' in my time. Once when we was gettin' out a slice up there jest below where you see that derrick"—and he pointed to where a flying buttress of marble seemed to bolster up the mountain at one side of the entrance, a striking piece of natural architecture left by the accident of cutting away the marble each side—"you know we had a way of strippin' back the cotton an inch or so, an' then shakin' out the black paowder. We had about a dozen holes to bust up there, and jest as I had touched two or three, I heard a kind of a 'siss' behind me, an' I sez, 'Gosh, boys, she's in the paowder!' We had to git up about ten or a dozen feet of ladder to git out of that hole, and we didn't stop long. We'd jest got over the edge when the place was pretty well filled with pieces of rock. You can bet I give that feller a combin' thet stripped that cotton. He said they was just goin' down in to find us. They'd heared the blow and didn't see us in the smoke. I told him he'd better git his mind on strippin' his cotton ruther'n goin' down in holes pickin' up pieces of humans. Then we went back and fired the other nine."

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Graciously provided by Peggy and Pat Perrazo from material available at their website, "Stone Quarries and Beyond," www.cagenweb.com/quarries/ —check it out.



Here again our gray is harnessed to a sweep.—Page 217.

In a short time everything was ready. The men were gathered in groups well out of danger, a great shoulder of the mountain protruding itself between us and the charges. The foreman and his helper, Bill Crandall, had gone in with red-hot irons that the blacksmith had been keeping ready, and had come out again on a run, he having touched his nine and one more; for Bill had made but eight. It was a bit thrilling, the explosions following each other irregularly, tearing, wrenching, rending the ledges, filling the pit with booming, echoing thunder and flying rock, some pieces going sky-high and landing far up the mountain in the woods. Dense clouds of smoke and dust followed, against which were silhouetted the foreman's lank figure as he stood with his stocky helper, keeping count, well in advance of the men. As he counted he noted by "That was a good poke" or "Somethin' lifted then" the blasts that were doing what was wanted. "Yes, I kin tell pretty much whether they're liftin' the rock right or jest shootin' off for show. And I caount 'cause it's jest as well to know if all the holes has blowed," he continued. "I

wouldn't want to set down where one was hangin' fire, and it's pretty hard to tell, when two or three go off together, jest how many they be."

"No, 'taint dynamite. We use black paowder; it breaks the rock up better. Dynamite is so sort of sudden: it's apt to crumble everything up into dust in a little hole, and then it's so powerful it strains the hull maountain. It might run a crack right through a good vein of marble, and besides in this quarry we have to look out for the roof of our tunnel."

This quarry of which "Ed" Hooker was the overseer is perched high up on the side of a steep mountain, and reached by a rough road that zigzags its way laboriously through side-hill pastures and sugar-maple woods, past a dingy line of quarrymen's houses, adhering with apparent uncertainty to the steep slope, their front-yard flower-gardens nearly bumping the eaves, and the pig-pens and chicken-yards almost hanging from the cellar walls; then the road curves itself up to where the quarry rears its white cliffs. The open cut is a pit only in part. The marble mountain has been sliced down