

# stonexus

## MAGAZINE

THE PERIODICAL PUBLICATION  
OF THE STONE FOUNDATION

NUMBER XIII

EDITOR / CURATOR,  
GRAPHIC DESIGN  
Tomas Lipps  
GRAPHIC PRODUCTION  
Julie Kandyba

Printed and published in the USA  
by STONEXUS PRODUCTIONS LLC  
116 Lovato Lane, Santa Fe NM USA 87505  
www.stonefoundation.org  
email: tomas@stonefoundation.org

FRONT COVER:  
*UNTITLED*, 2012, by Jorge Yazpik  
volcanic rock, 1.45 x 1.21 x .92 meters  
(4.76' x 4' x 3')  
photo: Eduardo Landa  
below:  
Cormac's Chapel, Rock of Cashel,  
exterior view of the apse and square towers  
over the transept arms, Co Tipperary, Ireland  
photo: Chris06 via CreativeCommons



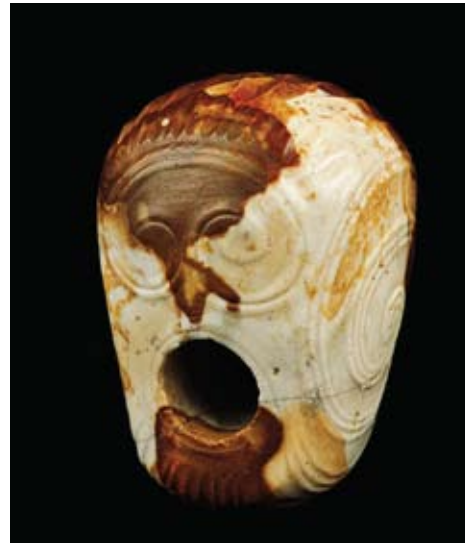
## IN THIS ISSUE:

### PHOTOS TO THE EDITOR

*BONGUENSA TEMPLE* . . . . . 3  
Photos by Charles Junkerman

**TEKTONIKA PHOTO GALLERY:**  
*JORGE YAZPIK, Sculptor* . . . . . 13

**STONEXCERPT** . . . . . 68  
from *STORIES IN STONE*  
by David B. Williams



above:  
ceremonial mace head, flint, 7.9 cm tall (3.1 in)  
Found in the Neolithic passage tomb at Knowth,  
Co. Meath, Ireland—dated to 3300-2800 BC (!)  
photo: National Museum of Ireland, Dublin



above: paving detail of triangular 'stonender' on  
pages 36-37, John Shaw-Rimington & Sean Adcock

### FEATURES

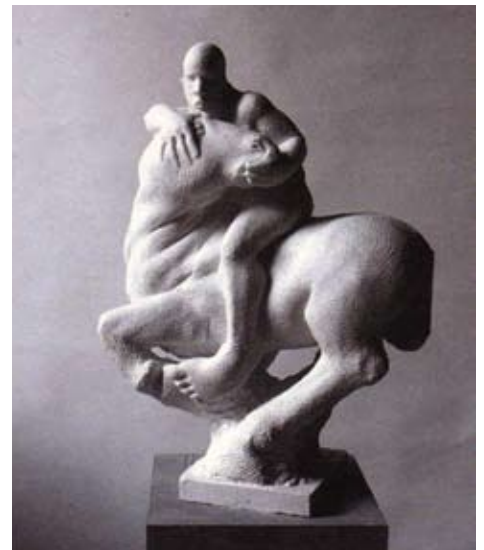
*BUILDING BELL ROCK LIGHTHOUSE*  
by Doug Bell . . . . . 9

*A STONEXCURSION with friends*  
*in RHODE ISLAND and MASSACHUSETTS*  
by Tomas Lipps . . . . . 22

*FOLLOWING THE OLD STONE ROAD: EIRE*  
*Stonework of Ireland Part II* . . . . . 49  
by Tomas Lipps

*THE STORIED STONES OF*  
*SANTA MARIA DE OVILA*  
Part I by Robert M. Clements . . . . . 38  
Part II by Edwin Hamilton . . . . . 42  
Part III by Pierre de Montaulieu . . . . . 46

*SOURCES/MISCELLANEOUS NOTES* . . . 72  
below: Horse and Rider, Michael Quane, 2001



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. nexi 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-uh-zeen), n.

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





# BONGUENSA



Photos by Charles Junkerman

***Bongeunsa Temple*** was founded in 794 about a kilometer from its present location on the slope of Sudo mountain in Samsung-dong at the southern edge of metropolitan Seoul.

Buddhism was introduced into Korea in the 4th century, 'blended' with the indigenous Shamanism and nature worship, evolved with Chinese and Indian influences, and flourished until the establishment of the *Chosun* Dynasty in 1392. During the five century *Chosun* hegemony over the Korean peninsula, Confucianism became the sole state religion and Buddhism was suppressed but continued to evolve.

Bongeunsa was reconstructed in 1498. From 1551 through 1936 (when it was largely destroyed by fire) it was the main temple of the Korean *Seon* (Zen) sect of Buddhism. The temple suffered more destruction during the Korean War.

The Korean Peninsula was Japan's land bridge to continental Asia and Korean culture has had a deep and lasting influence on Japanese culture. This is most remarkable in the fields of architecture, ceramics, painting, statuary. . .and stonework.

Buddhism was transformed as it traveled from India through China to Korea and then to the Japanese archipelago (later Japanese Buddhists established direct connections with China).

*"The oldest Japanese Buddhist temple, Asuka-dera, constructed by craftsmen from the ancient Korean kingdom of Baekje in 588, was modeled upon the layout and architecture of Baekje."* \*

Thus it should not surprise us that the stonework in these photos expresses the character and skill that we have come to associate with Japanese stonework. Whole villages of stonemasons (and other artisans, notably potters) settled in (or were relocated to) Japan—the *Anoh-shu* people, for instance, brought their stone-working skills from Korea, settled near Kyoto, and their descendants were involved in the building of Azuchi-jo\*\* (*jo*- castle) which was to serve as the prototype for castles subsequently built during Japan's medieval period. □

T L

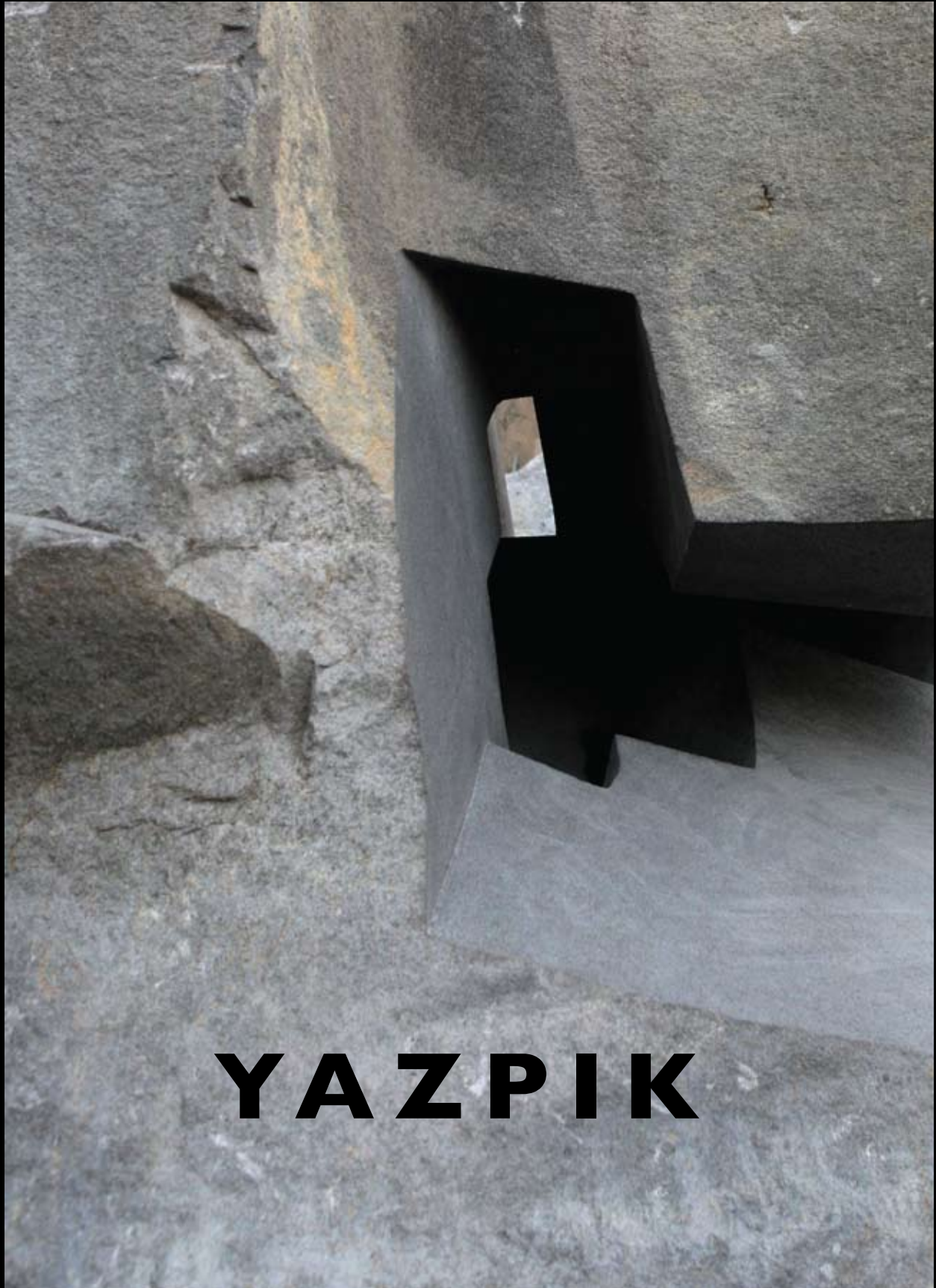
\*Kakichi Suzuki. *Early Buddhist Architecture in Japan*. Kodansha International (1980)

\*\* (see Stonexus #XI, pp 52-55)









work-in-progress photo: T L



Each finished piece is a creature, but a nameless creature. Yazpik believes applying a title would condition a viewer's response.

left: *UNTITLED*, 2004, volcanic stone, 6.6' x .2.4' x .2.6'  
 and *UNTITLED*, 2007, volcanic stone and wood, (tzalam) 7.5'  
 above: *UNTITLED*, 2009, obsidian, 1.6' x 2.4' x 1.7'  
 right: *UNTITLED*, 2012, volcanic stone, 4' x 3.5' x 3' photo: T L  
 below: Jorge Yazpik, 2014 photo: T L







photos: T L

## StonExcerpt

David B. Williams, self-described 'Geologist/Writer' has a keen interest in stone types that have, due to their geological qualities, proved attractive to man-the-builder and for that reason became intimately involved in our cultural history. In *STORIES IN STONE* he profiles such building stones as New York Brownstone, Boston Granite, Carmel Granite, Minnesota Gneiss, Florida Coquina, Indiana Limestone, Colorado Petrified Wood, Carrara Marble, East Coast Slate and Italian Travertine. We are made aware of formative processes that have endowed these lithic entities with their peculiar character and the way in which they have been articulated, particularly in the urban environment.

from Chapter 8:

### THE TROUBLE WITH MICHELANGELO'S FAVORITE STONE

(The references to Amaco here relate to the description, earlier in the chapter, of the problems caused by the fateful decision on the part of Amaco's chairman and the architect (Edward Durrell Stone) to use six thousand tons of noble Carrara marble to clad their corporate headquarters in Chicago.)

If you want someone to blame for Amoco's marble problems, you have to look no further than Michelangelo. Whether in sculpting or architecture, he exploited the brilliance and luminosity of marble as few have ever done. His work gave marble, particularly Carrara marble, the prestige that made it the material to use in corporate boardrooms, prestigious law firms, and rarefied social clubs. Marble good enough for Michelangelo had to be good enough for Standard Oil.

Michelangelo first became attracted to stone at a young age, or so he told his biographer Vasari. "Giorgio, if I have any intelligence at all, it has come from being born in the pure air of your native Arezzo, and also because I took the hammer and chisels with which I care my figures from my wet-nurse's milk. Like so many others, his first experiences were hammering his local rock. Born in 1476 in Caprese, about fifty miles from Florence, Michelangelo spent his early years in the quarrying village of Settignano, where the stone carvers, or *scarpellini*, worked a blue gray sandstone known as *pietra serena*.

Suckled on stone or not, Michelangelo did not start as a sculptor. His father apprenticed the youngster to the great fresco painter Domenico Ghirlandaio. Michelangelo soon surpassed his master, who recommended his protégé to Lorenzo de' Medici, the head of Florence's ruling family. It was in Lorenzo's garden that Michelangelo discovered marble, at the age of fifteen or sixteen. Lorenzo was a renowned patron of the arts, with a rich collection of Greek and Roman sculptures, plus a resident sculptor, Bertoldo di Giovanni, a student of Donatello, the greatest sculptor of the early to middle 1400s.

Again Michelangelo's precocious ability aided his development. Vasari described how the young artist so impressed Lorenzo with his first effort in sculpting—a copy of a faun—that Lorenzo invited Michelangelo to move into his house, gave him fine clothes, and allowed him to sit at the family dining table. Perhaps apocryphal, the faun has never been found, but Michelangelo did begin to work regularly with marble in the Medici garden. He remained in Lorenzo's care for two years, until his patron's death in 1492.

Over the next dozen years, while living in Bologna, Florence, and Rome, Michelangelo completed as many as ten sculptures. These include the *Sleeping Cupid*, which he dirtied up and tried to pass off as a Roman antique, and his first surviving life-size piece, a fleshy, staggering *Bacchus*. He also traveled to the quarries in Carrara, seventy-five miles east and north of Florence, for the first time to find a piece of marble. Out of a brilliantly white, crack-free block he carved the sublimely holy Vatican *Pieta*.

Next came his colossal *David*, hewn from a block of Carrara first quarried in 1464, and later dragged through the mud to Florence and worked by two other carvers, before sitting outside in Florence for over three decades.

What unites his work, particularly the *Pieta*, *David*, and later *Moses*, is that Michelangelo had transcended his medium. He had become an alchemist, turning stone into living beings. When you look at any of these great statues, it is hard not to think that you are looking at works carved of flesh and cloth. Every fold, every muscle, every feature is so realistic that you expect *David* or *Moses* or *Mary* to become animate and to tell of the great thoughts revealed in their faces. It feels as if they are present.

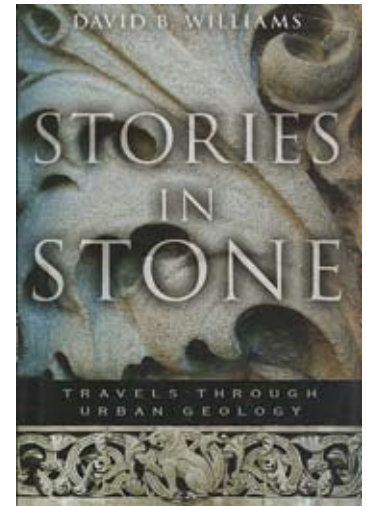
By finding the essential elements of humanity and transmitting them to stone, Michelangelo had in turn bestowed a sense of grace on marble. No one who has seen the *David* or the *Pieta* could every look at the material again and not be reminded of refinement, of the ethereal spirit of humanity. And those qualities eventually became synonymous with the stone, whether the viewer had seen Michelangelo's work or not.

Everything about *David* is awe inspiring—his size, his location in the Galleria dell' Accademia in Florence, the feeling of reverence in the air around him—yet only a few yards away is the Gallery of the *Slaves*, with its roughed-out statues. The figure in each appears to be wrenching himself out of his marble bounds. In all five you can see the process of how Michelangelo chiseled a man out of rock, of how he missed precise and rough cuts, of how he revealed the textures and light within the stone.

These pieces are not made of flesh. You know Michelangelo was working with rock. They are not sensuous. They have a density and a mass. They are grounded.

Michelangelo described his process of sculpting as the "art which operates by taking away." Other sculptors have written of releasing the spirit or story within the stone. I do not have the experience or knowledge to question artists' beliefs, but the unfinished blocks illustrate a profound link between man and stone, a link where a man recognized the strengths and weaknesses of stone and worked with them to create astounding works of art. Exploited to its fullest by Michelangelo, the bond between stone and humankind is central not only to sculpting but also to architecture.

Like Amoco, Michelangelo also suffered for his decision to use Carrara. Instead of losing face and 70 to 80 million dollars, as Amoco did, Michelangelo almost died twice to get at the stone. In December 1516 he convinced Pope Leo X and Cardinal Giulio de Medici that they should let him design a new façade for the church of San Lorenzo in Florence. The façade would be "both architecturally and sculpturally, the mirror of all Italy," wrote Michelangelo to the cardinal's treasurer and liaison, Domenico Buoninsegni. Michelangelo proposed a more audacious undertaking than anything he, or anyone since antiquity, had done. The last great all-marble building in Italy had been constructed in 203, and the entire façade of San Lorenzo would be marble, including a dozen monolithic columns.





# BUILDING THE BELL ROCK LIGHTHOUSE

by Doug E. Bell

## *It is 1804,*

*and you are an 18-year-old sailor on the HMS York, a former mercantile vessel now outfitted with 64 British cannon and sent to patrol the North Sea during the Revolutionary War with France. You are 11 miles off the east coast of Scotland. It is January. The sea is raging, the wind is cold and strong and getting stronger.*

*Clinging to a railing as the 174-foot ship slides down into the trough between two huge swells, you glimpse, far-off, a weak twinkle of light. A window on the mainland. Arbroath? Most likely.*

*You picture a snug, stone-walled room, food on the table, a fire in the hearth, a girl's shining hair. It is the last warm thought you will ever have. You and the other 490 sailors aboard the York will die this night in these frigid, frothing waters—victims not of enemy bombardment but of a foolish and unimaginative government.*



On that fateful night the HMS York joined a long, long list of vessels to be terminally impaled on a barely submerged, jagged up-thrust of sandstone known sometimes as Inchcape Island, but more often as Bell Rock.

The shipwreck of the York, and many others, need not have happened.

Five years earlier an ambitious, mostly self-taught civil engineer from Glasgow had drawn up detailed plans for a stone lighthouse tower to be built on Bell Rock. His name was Robert Stevenson and he had worked his way up through the ranks of the Northern Lighthouse Board, starting out as a young man assisting his stepfather in the tending of coal-fired lighthouses and earning the title of Lighthouse Builder by the time he was 25.

His plan for a lighthouse on Bell Rock was spurred by a horrendous storm in December 1799. In one night 70 ships were sunk; they were either broken on the reef or foundered and went down nearby while trying to avoid it.

The Board listened to Stevenson's proposal, and then promptly shelved it. In their eyes, the challenges were too many and the risks too severe:

- How could construction take place upon a reef that is under 12 to 16 feet of water for 20 to 22 hours each day, at lowest annual tides?
- In the North Sea's volatile climate, building would only be feasible during a brief stretch in the summer, and even then only in lulls between rough weather.
- With a worksite 11 miles offshore, both men and materials would be vulnerable to any change in wind or wave patterns during transit.
- The budget Stevenson submitted amounted to 42,685 pounds, 8 shillings, a financial risk that was deemed too great for a lighthouse that many felt could never be completed.
- Finally, and perhaps most fatally for Stevenson's proposal, the

Board would not consider a project of this type because it had simply never been done before. No stone lighthouse had ever been built on rock submerged beneath the sea.

In his journal, Stevenson described the attitude at the Board's hearing as "easy to justify here, but rather harder to explain to a sailor's widow."

The most comparable previous project was the Eddystone lighthouse, built at Devon 50 years earlier. Known as 'Smeaton's Tower' after builder John Smeaton, it was considered a 'sea-washed' lighthouse, with its base vulnerable to much abuse from the sea when both waves and tides were high. Two previous attempts on the site had failed, but Smeaton had come up with several crucial engineering advancements. Flaring widely at the bottom, he described the lighthouse tower as having been inspired by the shape of a sturdy, storm-resistant oak tree. His was one of the first projects to use hydraulic lime for maritime masonry, and he had pioneered a technique of locking stone blocks into each other via complicated dovetail joinery and marble dowels.

Stevenson's design incorporated many of Smeaton's advancements, with some important changes to mass, height and joinery of the stonework for a Bell Rock lighthouse. Stevenson's proposal had also laid out a detailed construction plan that included the construction of two rudimentary wharves on either end of the rock, equipped with hoists to off-load pre-cut stones and other building materials onto the flat-decked freight cars of a miniature railroad, by which means such heavy loads could glide to the building site.

If the government's purse-string minders had cared to look closely they would have seen that Stevenson had anticipated and answered their concerns—with the possible exception of the unavoidable necessity of paying for such a complicated project.

above: Painting by JMW Turner commissioned by Stevenson in 1819 as a frontispiece for his book *Account of the Bell Rock Lighthouse*.



## *a StonExcursion with friends in* RHODE ISLAND & MASSACHUSETTS

Enroute to the Stone Foundation Regional Gathering in Barre, Vermont in 2011, we stopped in Rhode Island at the invitation of friends Kevin Baker and his wife, Laura Willson. Kevin is a stonemason who lives and works near Providence, Rhode Island where he said there was admirable stonework that I would be interested in seeing. He was right. For two days we trucked around through a kaleidoscopic stonescape that reflected the variations in the underlying geology and the skill and ingenuity of those who built with it.

Here are a dozen pages of photographs of the more marvellous of the many marvelous assemblages of stone and rock we encountered in our meandering.

left and below: Roadside entryway and cliffside retaining wall, Ocean Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island. These walls were painstakingly constructed using the native shale rock of Aquidneck Island where Newport is located. The columns have been robbed of their bluestone caps and those seen here on the walls were gone a year later.





### ***Swan Point Cemetery,***

overlooking the Seekonk River in Providence RI, is one of the country's first and finest garden cemeteries. It was established in 1846, and some of Rhode Island's most prominent citizens are interred here.

Of particular interest to us stonies were a number of marble monuments in one corner of the cemetery which seemed to have been done by the same hand, or at least at the same workshop. The floral elements released from the marble block by a skilled and sensitive carver were more than merely decorative—they were nearly alive.

Flowers, though, are ephemeral and marble is soluble, and the forms lovingly realized long ago—by hands that no longer exist—are gracefully surrendering themselves to time and weather.

right: Also of interest: the boundary wall and entryway built in 1894 using boulders excavated from the estate. Visit the Stonexus page at Facebook.com for an old photo of these stones shown here being placed.

below: The old fieldstone trolley depot just opposite the entryway shown at right. It was built in 1903.

facing page: the marble carvings described above.











### *Providence. . .*

above and left: Hand hammered perimeter wall bordering an old estate on Blackstone Boulevard, Providence, Rhode Island. As we were standing in the street admiring this wall a passing car slowed and stopped and its driver came over to check us out. He turned out to be Rhode Island stonemason and Stone Foundation member, Neil Best.

below: The borderline between Guatemala and Rhode Island. It is located on Power Street in the historic East Side of Providence. Heavy machinery needed for a construction project in the estate bordered by the wall on the left could not pass through the roofed entryway so the wall adjoining it was removed to provide access. When the project was complete the wall was rebuilt by a crew of Guatemalan stonemasons. Evidently they were not compelled, officially or personally, to replicate the local style of stonework even though they used at least some of the same stone and had an excellent example to emulate in the immediate vicinity. And on that note. . .our excursion ended. We hope you enjoyed it. □





# FOLLOWING THE OLD STONE ROAD: ÉIRE *part two*

*by Tomas Lipps*

The Lakes of Killarney, looking south.

# DROMBEG



## ***Drombeg Stone Circle,***

aka the Druid's Altar, is purported to be the best known and most visited stone circle in Ireland but there were few folks about when I arrived late one September afternoon and received a marvelous win in the quality-of-light lottery. The sun went behind the ridge shortly after the moment captured above.

Its diameter is smaller than the Kenmare circle yet it is a more powerful site, not least because it relates to the surrounding terrain. It is comprised of 17 stones of which two have, over time, gone missing and are represented here by smaller, placeholder stones.

The recumbent 'altar' stone and its perhaps inevitable association with Druids and human sacrifice combined with the discovery

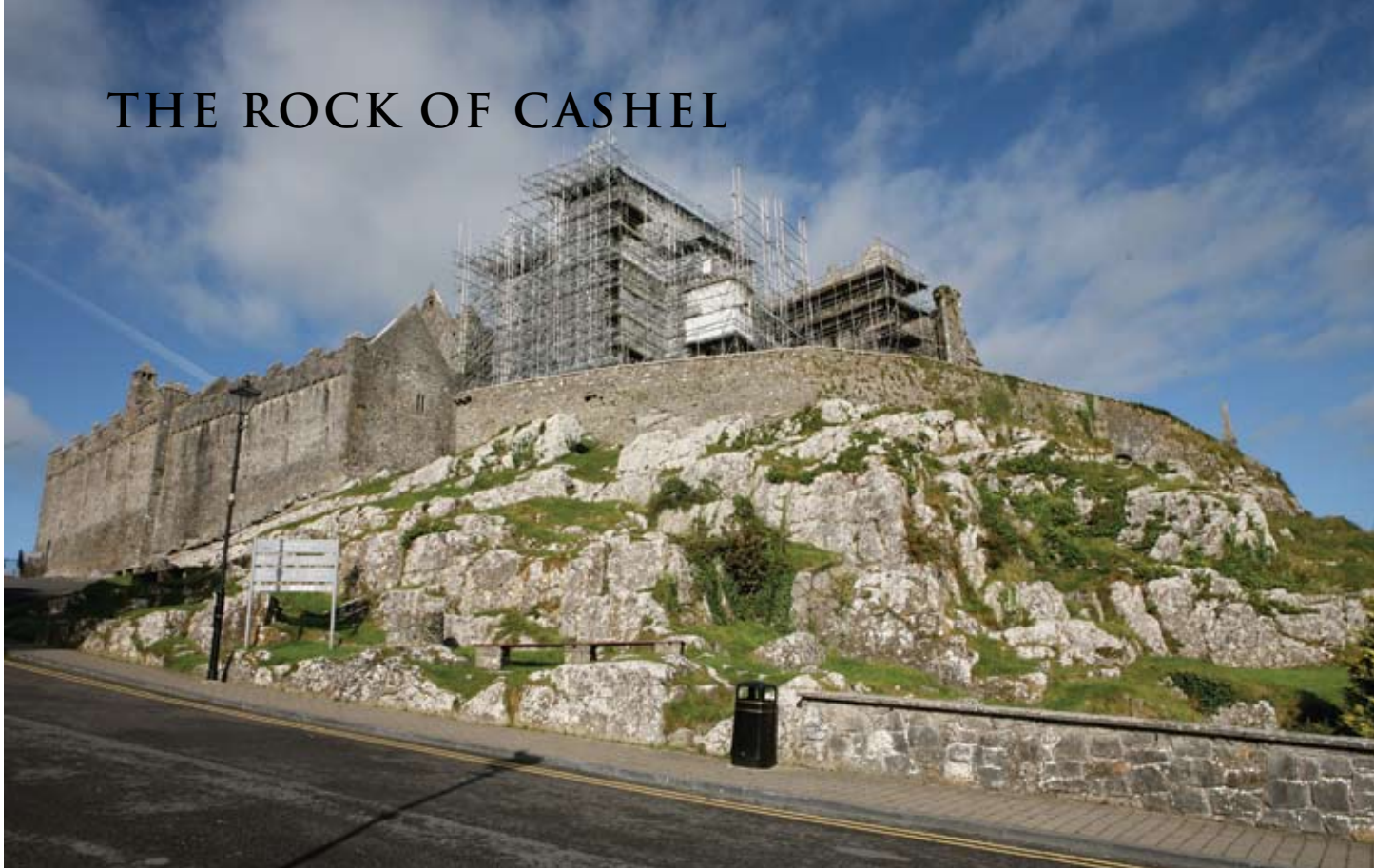
of an urn containing charred human bones (when it was excavated by archaeologist E. M. Fahy in 1958) have given Drombeg a "rather dark reputation" (in the words of one guidebook.) The lurid visualization of a notable psychic reported in *the* book on megalithic stone circles by respected archaeologist Aubrey Burl doubtlessly helped.

Archaeology is an imaginative science. Mr. Fahy fancied that the pair of stones nearest to the camera are "...distinctly suggestive of a pointed male upright and a very broadly fecund female. (he) suspected '...the possibility that a fertility cult was an integral part of the beliefs of the circle builders.' Other observers, however, may conclude that sometimes a stone is just a stone.\*"

\*Howard Goldbaum, *VoicesFromTheDawn.com*



# THE ROCK OF CASHEL



## *The Formidable Rock of Cashel*

This upthrust limestone dome standing over 200 feet high in the center of a fertile plain is a geologic anomaly, surrounded as it is by the Galtee Mountain rockscape of sandstone and shale.

## *Cashel of the Kings. . .*

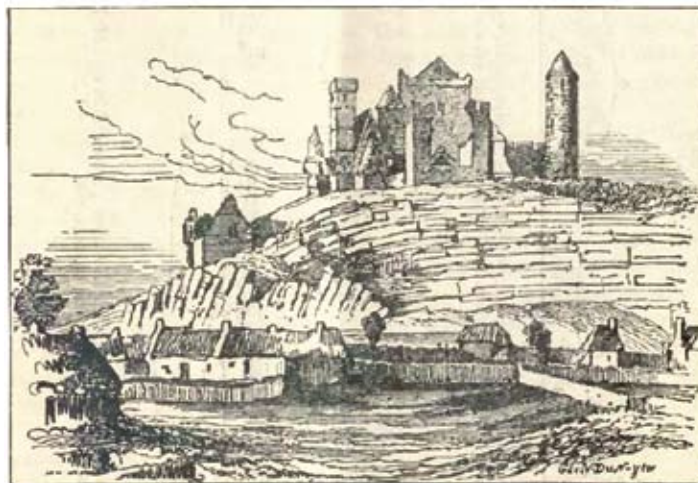
Cashel comes from the Irish *caiseal* meaning strong fort and while there were many throughout the land, this one became site-specific, *the* Cashel. Its commanding eminence made it a seat of power since at least the 4th century and from it one clan, the *Eóghanachta*, ruled Munster, the southern quarter of the island, for over 500 years, presiding over the subject clans that comprised its political landscape.

The ascendancy of one of these clans, the *In Déis Tuaiscirt*, or *Dál gCais* as they came to be known, resulted in the overthrowing of *Eóghanachta* rule and, later, the acquisition of the Kingship of Munster by *Brian Bóruma* (Brian Bóru) who ultimately became the only High King to rule effectively over the entirety of Ireland—if only briefly and by right of might. The *Imperator Scottorum* (Emperor of the Irish) as he was styled, conducted his rule over the fractious island from the Rock of Cashel from 1002 to 1014.

The great grandson of Brian Boru, *Muirchertach Ua Briain* (Murtagh O'Brien), King at Cashel, gifted the Rock to the Bishop of Limerick in 1101. Such a bestowal to the church was believed to earn salvation in the afterlife but historians surmise a political motive as well: this rendered the Rock, the ancestral capital of the rival *Eóghanachta* dynasty, unavailable to them forever, disenfranchising them in a sense. The *Eóghanachta* King Cormac, however, restored the historical association of his clan with the Rock by the act of building there, from 1127 to 1134, the marvelous church that still bears his name: *Teampul Chormaic* (Cormac's Chapel)

The Chapel, undergoing restoration, was encased in scaffolding and off-limits when we visited. It was frustrating to be denied the opportunity even to view what was the first real flowering on Irish soil of continental styles of building—the two square towers over the arms of the apse had a precedent in Germany, a land and a culture familiar to Irish missionaries. The masons, whoever they were,

concocted an architectural amalgam, the fusion of continental and insular practice and style. *Hiberno-Romanesque* architecture with its prolific architectural stone carving would take many forms. Kilmalkedar church on the Dingle peninsula, built a few years later, includes the blank arcades and ornamentally carved portal with recessed orders (though the Irish portal with inwardly inclined door-jambs, abandoned at Cashel, was retained in Dingle). Both churches had corbelled stone roofs. Kilmalkedar's has collapsed; that of Cormac's Chapel, constructed of ashlar stone, survives. The chapel, like other stone-roofed early Irish Christian churches, was not more than 20 feet wide; Irish builders had evidently determined that was the limit that could safely support a steeply corbelled roof. When the Archbishopric was fixed at Cashel in 1172 a more capacious structure was needed and the Cathedral that stands there now in ruin was built; the older church became a chapel or chapter-house. St. Patrick's Cathedral was burned in 1491 in a failed attempt to incinerate the Archbishop and burned again in 1647 by Cromwellian forces—with 3,000 townsfolk inside. It is, perhaps, best left in ruin.





*the Power of the Portal. . .*

## CLONFERT CATHEDRAL

### *In 6th century Galway,*

near the River Shannon, Saint Brendan the Voyager founded a monastery and built its church. Clonfert became a center of learning and a place of pilgrimage—home, at one stage, to more than 3,000 monks. With apostolic zeal Saint Brendan traveled and founded a great number of churches and monasteries around Ireland, Scotland and Wales, but he chose to be interred at Clonfert.

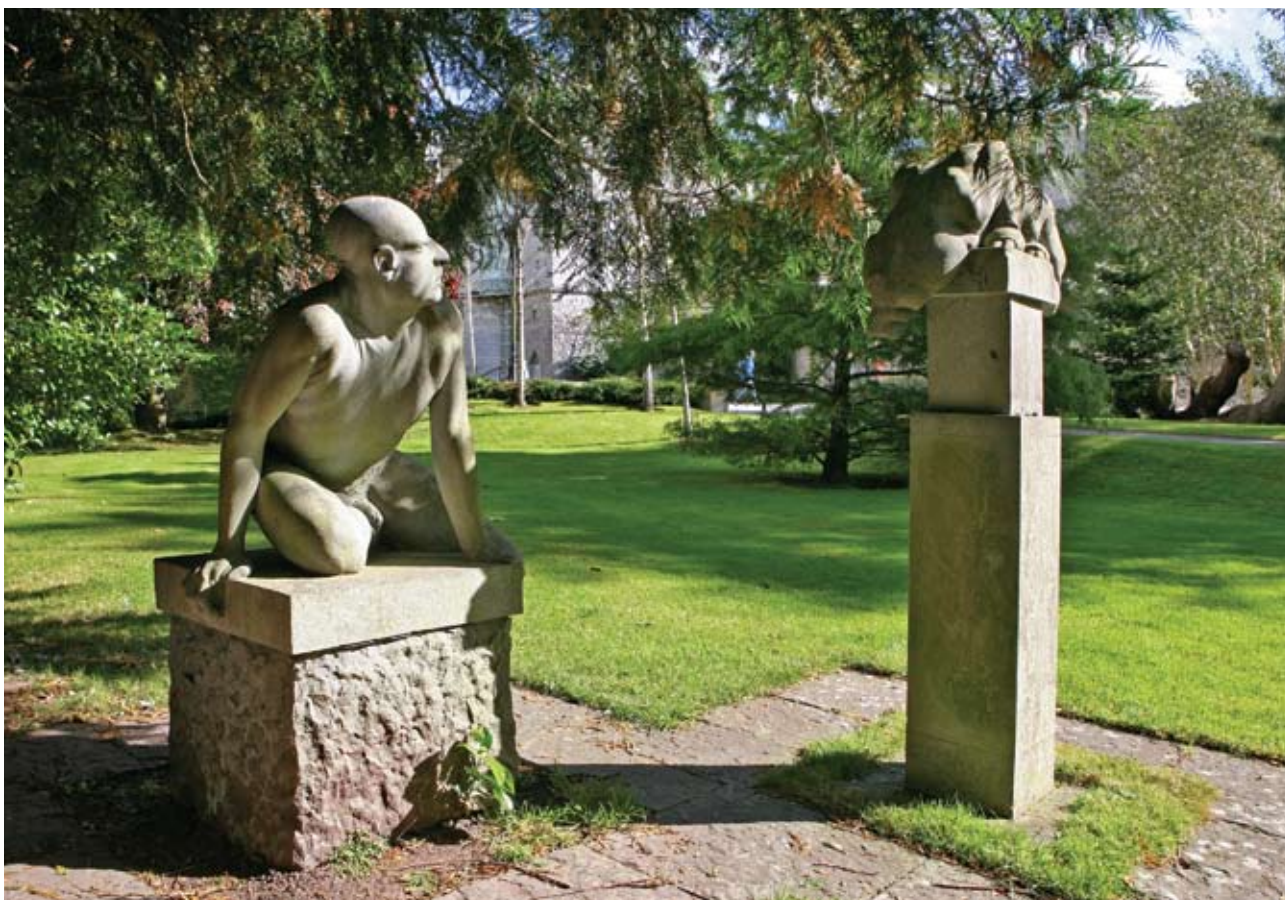
Saint Brendan's church was built of wood and would have been replaced several times. It was noted in the records that a 'stone' church there had burned (a common fate of churches) in 1045.

The Synod of Rath Breasail in 1111 created the diocese of Clonfert and the church became a Cathedral. Its simple, barn-like space enclosed by walls of indifferent masonry did not befit its new designation; this disparity may have motivated adorning the face of the plain structure with Ireland's most ornately carved portal. The exact date of the portal's construction is unknown but it may well be connected to another synod that took place, at the cathedral, in 1179.

The renowned Hiberno-Romanesque entryway with its distinctive inwardly inclined ancient Irish door jambs, has six 'orders' of carved sandstone; these have not weathered well. A seventh, inner order of blue limestone was added in the 15th century. An idiosyncratic mix of motifs have been carved into the column shafts, abaci, capitals and voussoirs. The triangular tympanum over the arches with its alternating (portrait?) heads peering down is a powerful compound feature. Can it be merely coincidental that the silhouette of the portal/pediment recalls the silhouette of the gable end of an early Irish church?







## MICHAEL QUANE

Quane has described his sculpting process as 'drawing into stone' and the surfaces scored with the cross-hatching texture left by his toothed chisel lend a graphic quality to the forms he painstakingly liberates from limestone rocks (he prefers not to work from quarried blocks). The effect is similar to an engraving; indeed, as a young boy he copied engravings from old copies of the *Illustrated London News*.\*

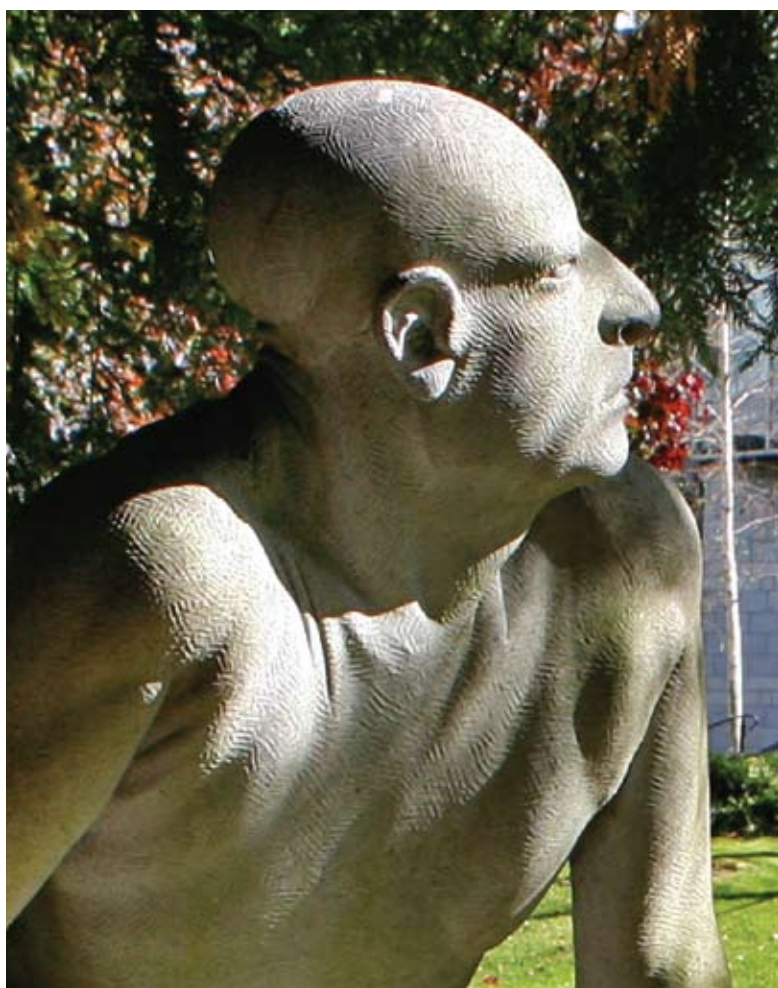
This texture (the surfaces of his sculptures are seldom ground and polished) gives the forms a tactile energy as they absorb the light. It also reminds the viewer of the degree of handwork involved in their creation.

His sculpture, while extremely personal, is firmly rooted in the traditions of Western Art: it relates to Greek sculpture (the *kouroi* and *Moskhophoros*, the Calf-Bearer), Gothic carvings, monumental statuary, Picasso (*Man with a Lamb*, 1942). His subject matter is enigmatic and often grotesque. Gothic gargoyles come to mind. Human figures, nude or nearly nude (and thus free of cultural reference) exist solitarily or in association with animals: riders on horses, figures in relation to, or combined with, bizarre creatures, such as the work pictured here.

Quane's human and animal figures are emphatically non-heroic, even prosaic and sometimes cartoon-like, but none-the-less poetic. There is not enough space here to do his work justice; look for it to be featured in a future issue

*"He not only believes that the impulse to carve grew out of the impulse to draw, but that it is. . . the same impulse. Carving is drawing. He borrowed his father's chisels and began to carve wood. He visited the caves close to his home and began to carve into the stone. . . this activity was undertaken in secret, an aspect of the teenager's growing awareness of internal life."* Aidan Dunne, art critic, *The Irish Times*

above and left: *FIGURE TALKING TO A QUADRAPED*, Sculpture in the President's Garden, University College Cork, Kilkenny limestone,





# THE STORIED STONES OF SANTA MARIA DE OVILA

PART I

## WILLIAM RANDOLPH HEARST'S MONASTERY

by Robert M. Clements

### *Santa Maria de Ovila,*

like many Spanish religious establishments of the Middle Ages, was a fairly prosperous monastery. During the *Reconquista* it stood in that depopulated region behind the advancing Christian and the retreating Moorish armies. In a way the monks were as important in holding the land as were the soldiers in capturing it, for the monasteries provided secure islands of faith and farming in areas that were still a no man's land between Christian and Moslem. This explains why Santa Maria de Ovila had walls seven feet thick in places and tiny slit windows. Like the wise little pig, the monks of Ovila had no intention of fighting but they knew how to build themselves a strong house.

If we judge by the buildings, Santa Maria de Ovila was most active before about 1650, since that is the date of the last major building project, a large Renaissance doorway for the chapel. The doorway was something of an afterthought, however, and most of the buildings are Gothic; they include the very early Gothic refectory, which Saint Martin had watched being built; a somewhat later and very handsome High Gothic chapter house; a rebuilt version of the chapel with late and flamboyant Gothic vaults; and a rebuilt version of the Gothic cloister with a High Renaissance arcade. In fact, Santa Maria de Ovila displayed a bit of each style of Spanish religious building from 1200 through 1600.

Like all small Spanish monasteries, its history ended in August of 1835, with a royal decree suppressing all religious houses with fewer than twelve inhabitants. Santa Maria de Ovila then had four. The mayor of the nearby town of Trillo presided over the sale of the monastery's worldly goods; the highest price went for the wine-making



Destroyed by a tycoon: Santa Maria de Ovila in the 1930s. image via WikimediaCommons

equipment and an oxcart. Bargain hunters could also buy old beds, old broken tables, old cracked chairs, and old kitchen equipment. Most of the items in the inventory are disdainfully described as *viejo* (antiquated), probably because the sale took place several months after the monastery had been closed and nearly everything of value had disappeared in the meantime. In following years the roof tiles also disappeared, exposing the curious method which the Spanish medieval builders had of making their roofs: on top of the pointed vaults they packed dirt, smoothed it, and laid tiles loosely on top. A twentieth-century visitor reported seeing trees six to eight feet tall growing from the exposed roofs of the monastery.

The buildings themselves began to decay, of course, and this was hastened by very rough treatment from the local landowner, who used them as service buildings for a farm. The ornate Gothic chapter house, for instance, served as a manure pit. By 1930, about a hundred years after the monastery was closed, the buildings were in a reasonably advanced state of ruin, though all were still standing.

### *At this point*

Santa Maria de Ovila was discovered by an expatriate American art dealer, Arthur Byne, who had for years been selling European bric-a-brac to Americans, especially to William Randolph Hearst. Admittedly Santa Maria de Ovila was larger than the usual *objet d'art*, but Byne knew that size—and cost—were no impediment when it came to gratifying the Hearstian taste, and he naturally was interested in the commission that the sale of an \$85,000 monastery would produce. Since he represented the His-

panic Society of America, he also may have thought that Hearst's pocketbook offered the best way of preserving this decrepit but interesting piece of architecture.

Byne did some graceful perspective sketches of Santa Maria de Ovila, which for some reason he called Mountolive, and in late 1930 he sent them off to Hearst; very promptly the reply came back: Mr. Hearst was delighted and wanted to buy the entire monastery and have it transported to California. It should be added that such a request was not so astonishing as it might seem today; Hearst already had bought some gigantic architectural pieces—ceilings, a Gothic fireplace, doorways, and the like—to decorate his houses, especially the colossal castle at San Simeon. He also had bought another monastery from Byne in the twenties, and it was then sitting in a warehouse in the Bronx.

Despite the dire financial news of 1930, Byne's timing was excellent, for Hearst felt that he had plenty of money and was growing restless as San Simeon neared completion. The next project that he had in mind was an even bigger house in the forests of far northern California, where his mother had built a large hunting lodge called Wyntoon. Wyntoon had burned down, but Hearst planned to replace it with something truly stupendous—a medieval castle. It was to front on the McCloud River and rise in commanding towers and bastions to eight stories of pure fairy-tale splendor. It would have sixty-one bedrooms on six floors, and the eighth floor, at the top of the tallest tower, would contain only a solitary, round study for 'the Chief,' who could gaze upon his own domain and the thousands of acres of virgin forest surrounding it. But in late



# THE STORIED STONES OF SANTA MARIA DE OVILA

## PART II

### ACTS OF CREATIVE REDEMPTION by Edwin Hamilton

#### *Act 1*: The LIBRARY TERRACE GARDEN

In San Francisco, in 1999, I was being interviewed as a candidate to design a sculptural fountain in what was then known as Strybing Arboretum in Golden Gate Park. As I was showing my portfolio to the director of the Arboretum and the landscape architect they became interested in my stonemasonry work and said that there were some stone walls in the project. Then, when they told me they had permission to use the fabled monastery stones for these walls it took a great deal of self-control on my part not to visibly salivate.

I had known about these stones for a number of years: Originally, they came from the ruins of Santa Maria de Ovila, a Cistercian monastery in Spain that had been acquired by wealthy media titan William Randolph Hearst and were transported by ship to California to be used in the construction of a immense and extravagant (\$50,000,000—in the 1930s!) medieval castle near Mt. Shasta. When the project was abandoned due to financial constraints, the stones became a financial burden to him and he ceded them to the city to be used for a Museum of Medieval Art that never proceeded past the planning stage. For years after, the stones languished in Golden Gate Park, suffering neglect and disrespect, a succession of fires and the depredations of various scavengers—landscapers, gardeners, builders, sculptors, from which their blanket of blackberry brambles failed to protect them.

As any responsible stonemason would, I yearned to use them in a creative and respectful way, to give them a new life.

Now, with the commission in hand, I could implement my plan, which was to juxtapose a contemporary granite fountain against a freestanding dry stack wall built using the ancient stones—a wall that would be as much of a sculptural element as the fountain itself. I felt it was important to give a nod to the architectural provenance of the stones by exposing the beautiful carving and thus raise awareness of their history. All stone walls tell stories but these stones had a particularly interesting tale to tell.

In 2001, I finally got my hands on them. What a joy it was to assemble these stones, a present-day California mason handling material worked by ancient Spanish masons. Carving a molding into a block to match a molding carved 800 years ago was a highlight of my career.

At the entry to the Library Terrace Garden I incorporated a lattice-like element in the wall that is a “deconstructed vault” composed of a springer, voussoir, and keystone—tribute to its architectural heritage. A seating area was made of some of the choice carved work; many old masons’ marks and incised layout lines are exposed in the stone; it gives a really interesting insight into the story of the work.





# THE STORIED STONES OF SANTA MARIA DE OVILA

## PART II

### ACTS OF CREATIVE REDEMPTION by Edwin Hamilton

#### ***Act II:*** The RHODODENDRON PAVILION

Years later, in 2007 I was asked by what is now called The San Francisco Botanical Society at Strybing Arboretum to design and build the Rhododendron Pavilion, the centerpiece of their newly renovated Rhododendron Garden—again using the monastery stones!

I welcomed this unforeseen second opportunity to work with this material, the residue not only from fire damage, the effects of weathering, use in various municipal walling projects and scavenging, but from the removal of 19 truck/trailer loads of stone selected for use at the New Clairvaux monastery being built in La Vina up near Chico—after 80+ years the 'prodigal' stones had returned home, or at least to the Cistercian domain. I appreciated this felicitous turn of fate and followed the work there with interest.

While the stonework in the Golden Gate Park Library Terrace Garden gives hints of what once existed in medieval Spain, I saw this new project as an opportunity to further, and more directly, address this heritage here in San Francisco. While the stonework in the Library Terrace Garden gives hints of what once existed in medieval Spain, I saw this new project as an opportunity to further, and more directly, address this heritage here in San Francisco,

My conception for the Rhododendron Pavilion was to create a garden folly—there is a strong element of folly in the story of these stones—with the entirety of the design influenced by the original architectural use of the stone. Among them I discovered a *clef de voûte*—a keystone that had been the meeting place for multiple arches. I envisioned placing this at a central point on the ground plane to which everything built there would relate—the circular benches, the walls and the column bases, the paving elements.

The central area would be partially covered by a trellis made of curving steel I-beams supported by vertical posts and meeting at a steel compression ring above the *clef de voûte* at the center of the paving. These I-beams replicate the arches that once emanated from the *clef de voûte*. The posts would be encased in Greenscreen, a wire mesh product that accommodates the growth of plant material and fleshes out the proportions of the structure. (It helps to be married to a landscape architect—my wife, Tammara, came up with that idea.)

I decided the walls should be mortared and plumb—as they were originally—except for a slightly angled back-rest on the bench wall. As for the paving, I imagined bands of limestone radiating from the *clef de voûte* that would mimic the arching ribs that once converged on it—and between these bands, granite gravel.

With these basic ideas we began to build. From the previous project I had a pretty good idea of the inventory of available stones but found it impossible to draw up definite plans for what to build with them—this was improvised on a daily basis. I matched up column segments and had enough to place at the two entries to the pavilion, bracketing the bench. The placing of a beautiful semicircular column base at the center of the seat wall was inspired by the plan view of these columns.





# THE STORIED STONES OF SANTA MARIA DE OVILA PART III

## THE LINEAMENTS OF GRATIFIED DESIRE

by Pierre de Montaulieu

Desire entered the heart of the young Cistercian monk. Twenty one-year-old Brother Thomas X. Davis arrived in San Francisco in 1955. He had been sent from the Cistercian Abbey of Gethsemani in Kentucky to serve in the order's new monastery, established only months before in northern California: the Abbey of Our Lady of New Clairvaux. During a brief sight-seeing tour of San Francisco before departing to the monastery in the Sacramento River Valley, he was taken to Golden Gate Park and there shown the Ovila stones, a small mountain of crates in the underbrush shadowed by eucalyptus trees—a fragmented Cistercian creature. Brother Thomas, informed about their history, was inspired to revive those Cistercian stones, to integrate them in the fabric of the new monastery.

*"I resolved during the drive north to New Clairvaux to bring the stones home someday, where they would be loved and cared for on Cistercian soil. After all, Ecclesiastes tells of 'a time to cast away stones, and a time to gather stones together.'"*

For 40 years he patiently petitioned and doubtlessly prayed for the 'return' of the stones to Cistercian soil. Meanwhile, they suffered neglect, misuse, theft, vandalism, several destructive fires and, finally, an oddly fortuitous earthquake.

### *Ground breaking for the grandiose castle*

that Hearst planned to build near Mt. Shasta was scheduled to begin in July 1931—but before then, even before the last of the flotilla of eleven German freighters bearing the Ovila stones arrived in San Francisco, the project was halted. His wealth had been diminished by the Great Depression and the \$50,000,000 project was no longer feasible. The stones, encased in thousands of crates, were placed in the largest warehouse in the Port of San Francisco. They had entered a state of limbo which would last for decades.

Ten years later Hearst was persuaded to donate the stones to the city in exchange for waiving his very considerable storage fees (\$15,000 each year). He did so with the stipulation that they would be used for a Museum of Medieval Art associated with the de Young Museum in Golden Gate Park.

Hearst's architect, Julia Morgan, designated sites and developed plans for several arrangements of buildings, one of which was selected by city officials, but the project was forestalled by the war. In 1946 Morgan was again commissioned to prepare plans for the museum—a west coast version of the Cloisters in New York City was envisioned but funds for it never materialized.

Then a series of disastrous fires occurred. Many of the super-heated stones cracked or spalled when they were rapidly quenched by the firemen's hoses. What was left was a vast heap of stones, their identifying markings obliterated, which would be exploited by landscapers, municipal, private and amateur, by artists, by mystics. . .

### *Spiritual re-purposing. . .*

Ovila stones were used to configure a Druid sanctum in a grove of oak trees in the park. Ovila stones were also arrayed around a notable holy icon, but not a Christian one: City workers dumped a four and a half foot tall, bullet-shaped granite traffic bollard onto the

'bone yard' in the Park for safe-keeping, where it was discovered by Michael Bowen, aka Baba Kali Das, a disciple of the Goddess Kali. He and his fellow devotees, through the power of faith and acts of devotion, transformed it into a *Shiva Lingam*, an object of veneration, and using Ovila stones constructed an open-air Shakti Temple around it. Devotees, Hindu and hippy, came from around the world to attend Vedic ceremonies there.

The Golden Gate Park Shakti Temple became a *cause célèbre* when the city sued to repossess the land. In court it was determined that the Shakti Temple and the Druid sanctum had been consecrated by religious practice and were therefore legally inviolable.

The city finessed the *Lingam* issue by agreeing to transport the icon to the the Baba's garage which he had transformed into a temple. The Druid sanctum is still there in the park.

