

*A History
Of
The Lyons Turning Mill at Quarry Hills, Quincy MA*



Lyons Granite Company 1894 photo courtesy of Thomas Crane Public Library



Lyons Turning Mill 2011 photo by Liz Feitelberg

LYONS GRANITE CO.

INCORPORATED. CAPITAL \$40,000.

JAMES LYONS, President.

CLARENCE BURGIN, Treasurer.

❖ COLUMN CUTTING WORKS ❖

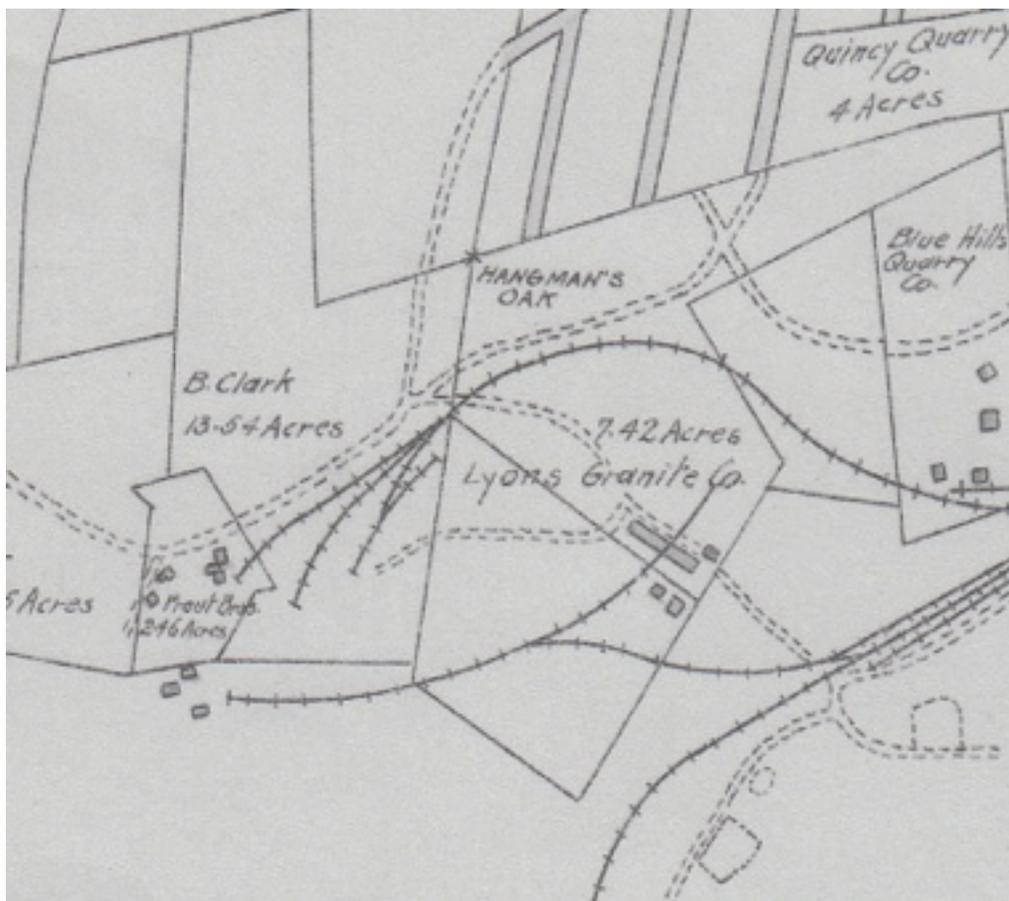
We make a specialty of large columns and balls,
round monuments and turned work of all kinds,
besides doing a general granite business, and as



**Our Plant is the Largest
And most Complete in Quincy**

we are in a position to give favorable estimates on all kinds of
granite work.

Lyons Granite Co., Quincy, Mass.



1894 ad and 1897 map Courtesy of The Thomas Crane Public Library

The Lyons Turning Mill at Quarry Hills

Built in 1894, the mill used giant lathes to turn granite and other kinds of stone into columns, spheres, and works of art. One of the largest facilities of its kind, the mill was 200 feet long and 46 feet wide. The Quincy Quarry Railroad, which was built at the same time, ran through its center and a 20-ton overhead crane inside the mill could handle the manufactured stone products that were made there.

The Quincy Quarry Railroad 1893-1918 had five miles of track serving the quarries on both sides of what is now Ricciuti Drive. It connected with the NYNH&H railroad at the West Quincy Depot on Willard Street. (Many of the same investors had a financial interest in the Lyons Turning Mill)

The Lyons Granite Co. had three derricks with a capacity of 25 tons each to service the quarry. Eighty men were employed at various jobs. The blacksmith shop had 3 forges. A capable stone polisher could earn almost \$3.00 per day in 1894.

Lathes and polishing machines produced columns up to 22 feet long and polished spheres up to 6 feet in diameter. Various types of stone from around the country were shipped here by rail and fashioned into works of art to be used in monuments or as architectural pieces on new buildings. In 1906 500 Milford Pink Granite balusters for Penn Station in New York were made here. The demolition of this station in 1963 was the catalyst for historic preservation in New York City. Some of those 29-inch tall pink balusters were rescued from the meadowlands dumping grounds and became lawn ornaments for New Jersey homeowners. In 1912 the Mill supplied the 5 piece fluted columns for the Corinthian Colonnade for the James A. Farley Post Office Building in New York City.

A contractor named McDermott of Brockton MA. built the turning mill in 1894 for James Lyons and other investors, at a cost of \$40,000.00. The lathes were imported from Scotland. It became the property of **The Quincy Granite Quarries Co.** in 1899, but in 1904 after financial trouble they were reorganized as the **Quincy Quarries Co.** with Theophilus King as the only Quincy stockholder. In 1907 Robert Cantley purchased the mill and operated it until 1917. Because his office was in Quincy Square in his ads he called himself "The Round Man on the Square". A list of machinery in 1906 included a 260 cubic foot per minute air compressor, one air plug drill, 35 air hand tools, 5 stone lathes, 6 polishing lathes, 1 lathe for balusters, balls and small work, 3 polishing machines, 1 stone crusher and a 151 horse power

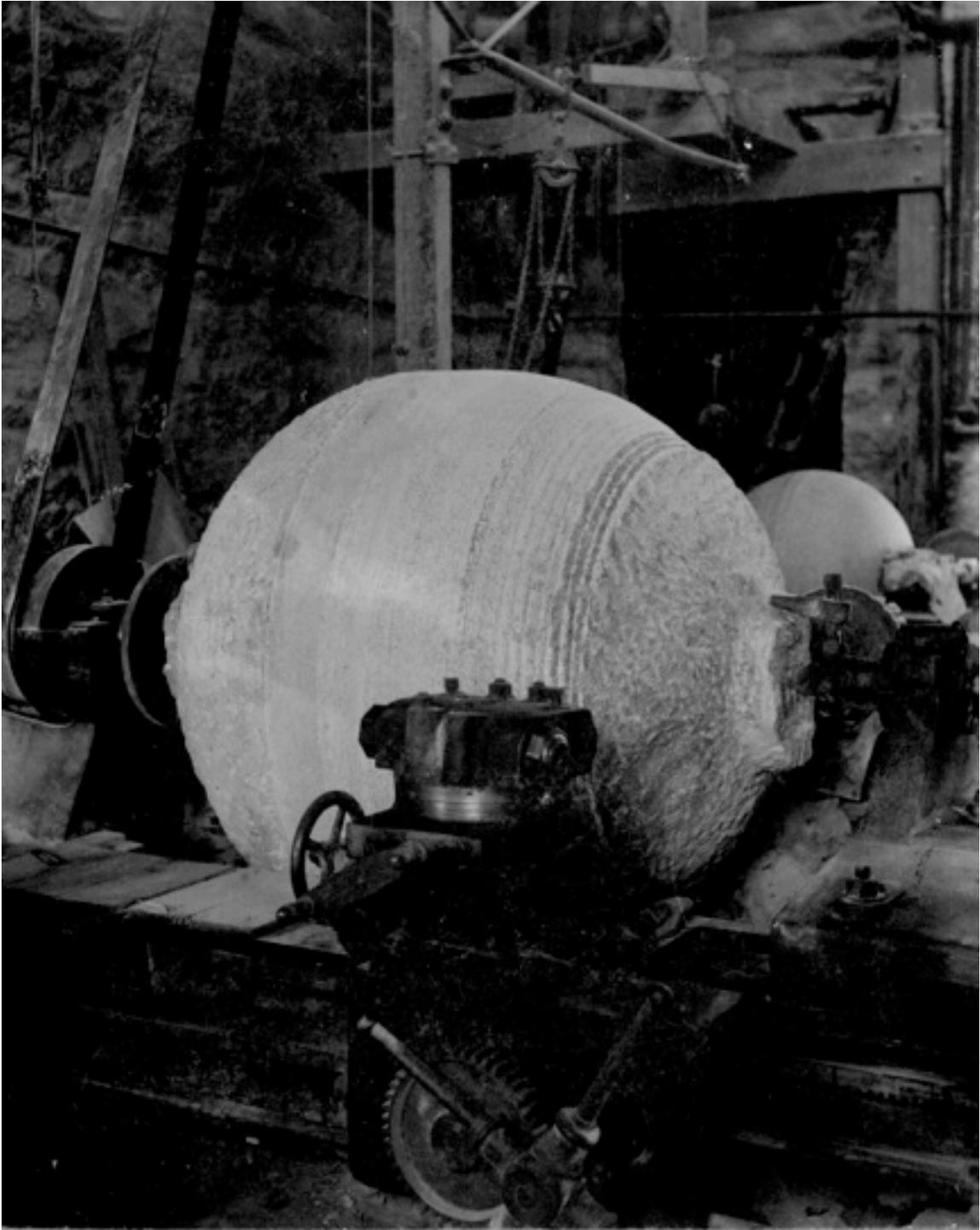
engine to drive machinery. When the mill closed in 1917, the machinery was sold and sent to Utah. The Quarry Railroad was abandoned a year later.

Only the solid granite walls of the mill survived years of being abandoned. In 1980 the site was destined to become phase 4 of the Quincy municipal landfill. A petition by members of The Quincy Historical Society and placement on the historic register saved the Lyons Turning Mill from being buried under tons of trash.

Today the turning mill is owned by the City of Quincy and is part of the Granite Links golf course at Quarry Hills. It has become a popular spot for wedding photography. Community Preservation Act grants have been used to stabilize the existing walls. The remains of the Lyons Turning Mill can be viewed from Quarry Hills Drive at the end of Ricciuti Drive. Several times during the year the Quincy Quarry and Granite Workers Museum open the Lyons Turning Mill for guided, interpretive tours.



Inside the Lyons Turning Mill -1894
Photo courtesy of Quincy Historical Society



A Ball Turning Lathe inside the Lyons Granite Company Mill
Photo courtesy of The Quincy Historical Society



Photo of the Back of the Lyons Mill and first quarry of The Lyons Granite Company
Photo courtesy of The Quincy Historical Society

Management, Directors and Stockholders
Of
The Lyons Granite Co. 1894

James Lyons President –Boston MA

Hon. William A. Hodges

Quincy Mayor

Vice President of Quincy Quarry Railroad, also held positions at one time as selectman, overseer of the poor, surveyor of roads, and assessor, stockholder Lyons Granite Company

Andrew Milne

Milne and Chalmers Granite Company

Director and Clerk of Lyons Granite Company

Barnabas Clarke - Quincy / Boston

Director of the Lyons Granite Company, was in the stone trade 26 years, President and Treasurer of Prout Brothers, moved to Boston and was in the liquor trade at 148 Kneeland St Boston MA

John Swithin - Swithin Brothers

Director of the Lyons Granite Company

Was also in the granite and real estate business

Edwin Hawkrige - Hawkrige Brothers Steel Company -Boston MA

Stockholder of the Lyons Granite Company

Clarence Burgin - Quincy

Director and Treasurer of The Lyons Granite Company and the Quarry Railroad

Treasurer of the City of Quincy

Thomas H. McDonnell - McDonnell and Sons Granite Co.

President of The Quarry Railroad and Stockholder of The Lyons Granite Company

SELECTED EVENTS FOR THE LYONS TURNING MILL PROPERTY

1763- Land owned by Josiah Quincy.

1836- Rowe Family of Milton sells a Quarry lot to Thomas Hollis a Stone Cutter; this becomes Fuller's Quarry in 1869.

1889- Quincy Family sells 220 acres to Swithin Brothers and Jones, who then sold lots to 10 different operators.

1889- James Lyons buys Fuller Quarry and starts Lyons Granite Co.

1893- Barnabas Clarke incorporates the **Quincy Quarry Co.,** John Swithin, F.J. Fuller, Thomas H. McDonnell, Andrew Milne, John Jones, Thomas Swithin and Clarence Burgin "to carry on stonework and buy and let lots". They also built The Quarry Railroad at a cost of \$80,000.00.

1894- James Lyons and other investors built at a cost of \$40,000.00 the Lyons Turning Mill.

1899- after buying up large tracts of property including the Quincy Quarry Co. the "Syndicate" as it is known forms a Corporation known as **The Quincy Granite Quarries Co.** They pay cash and stock in the new company to several private quarry owners and manufacturing plants. The Lyons Granite Co. also receives cash and stock for its mill and quarry.

1900- Deeds for the new corporation are filed at Dedham Court House.

Total assets were \$3,671,150.00. Total land was 530 acres. American Loan and Trust Co. of Boston MA issues bonds totaling 1,650,000.00 at 5% interest per year payable in gold coin.

1902- The Quincy Granite Quarries Co. opens up Blue Hill Quarry for “Dark Stock”

1903- The Quincy Granite Quarries Co. goes into receivership for failure to pay interest on its bonds.

1906- On June 18th properties sold at auction and reorganized as the **Quincy Quarries Co.** by a Maine corporation, Theophilus King is the only Quincy Stockholder. The Lyons Turning Mill was leased to Robert Cantley

1907-the Quincy Quarries Co. starts to sell off some of their property. Robert Cantley buys 25 acres of land including The Lyons Turning Mill and quarry known as Gold Leaf.

1917-Lyons Mill ceases operation and machinery is shipped to Utah.

1930- the Quincy Quarries Co. conveys 181 acres to Atlas Powder Co.

1942- the war put an end to the quarries and The Quincy Quarries Co. contracts out for quarries to be filled and for other use. Eventually most of their property is conveyed to the City for tax liens.

1968- Quincy opens municipal landfill at Riccuiti Drive.

1976- The Lyons Turning Mill was to be part of phase 4 of the landfill expansion.

1980- after petitions and public outcry the Lyons Turning Mill is saved.

1998- Quarry Hills Associates signs lease with the City of Quincy and begin to convert old landfill into the Granite Links golf course; The Lyons Turning Mill property is part of the leased land.

Present-The Lyons Turning Mill is the proposed site of the future Quincy Quarry and Granite Workers Museum

Prepared for The Quincy Quarry and Granite Workers Museum

By Tom Bonomi 2013