

Barre:

History of a Vermont Granite Town

Maartje L. K. Melchiors



(LS00558) A view of the landscape surrounding Barre circa 1900.

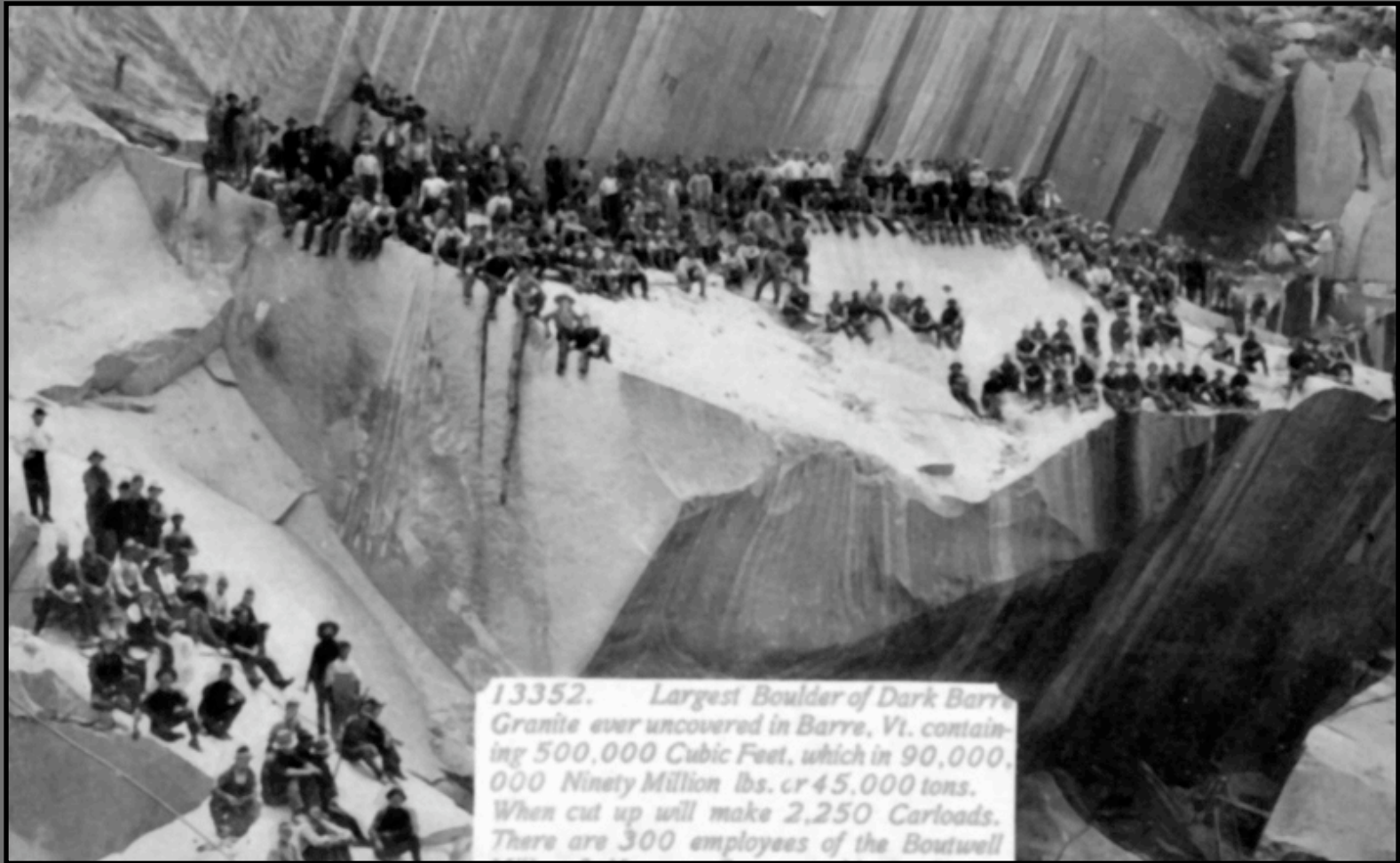
Prior to the American Revolution, the landscape that surrounds Barre was an unsettled wilderness. The land was roamed by Native Americans, who were the first to discover and utilize the vast granite deposits in the area. With the arrival of early settlers, granite became important in the construction of homes.

The development of the central railroad in Vermont, which reached Barre in 1875, signaled the beginning of the town's granite industry. It created the necessary link between Barre's granite and the world markets.



(LS11033) The image shows a locomotive which was part of the Central VT Railroad Line.

Granite deposits in Barre were estimated to contain 500,000 cubic feet of economically valuable rock.



(LS00609) Workers sitting on granite outcrop in late 1800's.

Before the development of motorized vehicles, it required as many as 30 horses or oxen to pull a large piece of granite. The railroad reached Barre by 1895, however horses were still needed to transport the granite from the quarry to the trains.



(LS 04330) This image shows horses pulling a heavy load of granite circa 1895.

From 1881 to 1893, Barre witnessed the construction of 625 new homes. 100 homes were constructed during 1900.



(LS03026) Main Street house built circa 1880.

Barre's population rapidly increased after 1875 as the granite industry surged.



1830: population 2,012

1890: population 6,790

1900: population 11,754

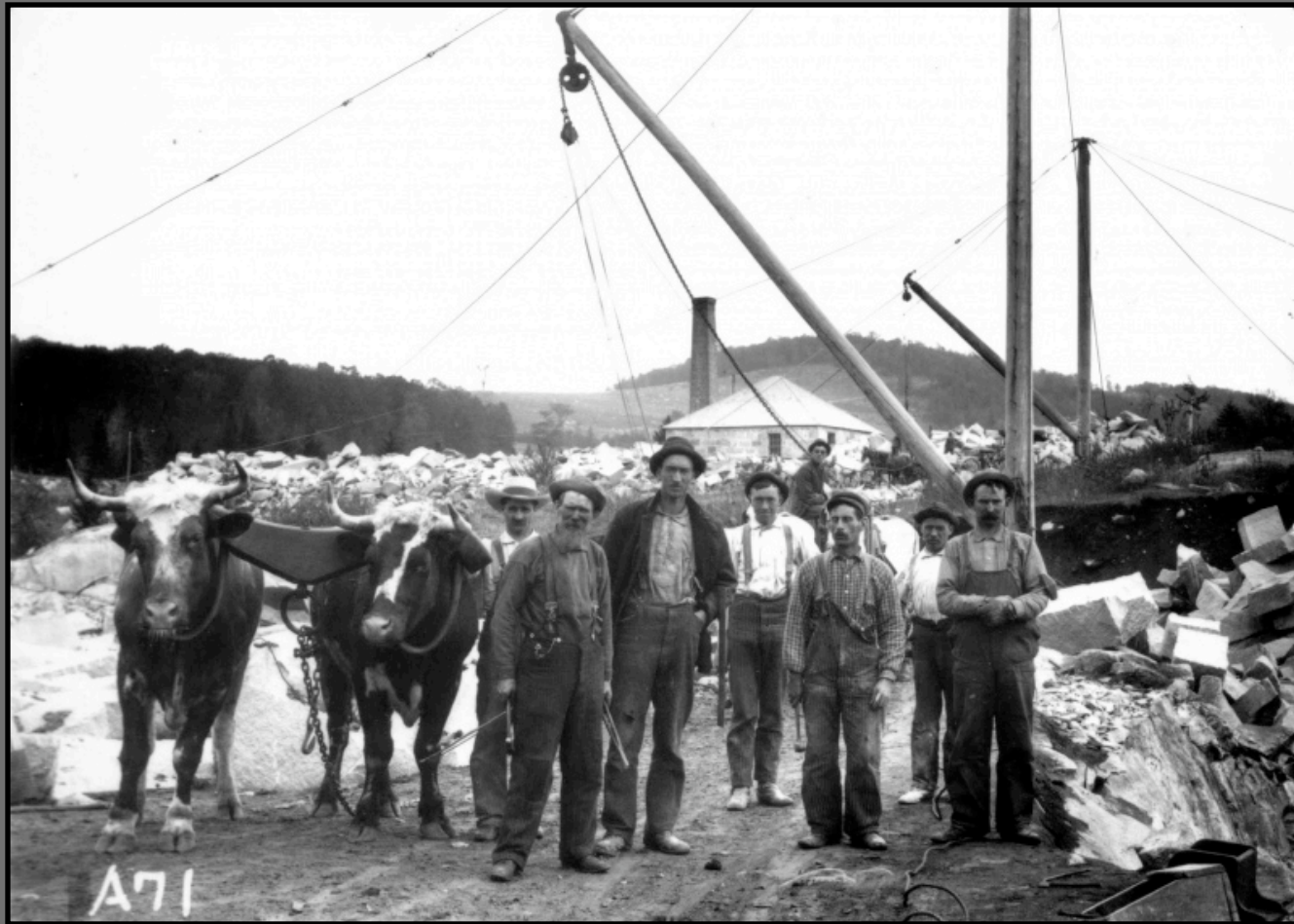
(LS00561) A view of Barre in 1885.

The rapidly growing population was fueled by the influx of immigrants from Europe who came to Vermont in search of fortune and a better life. The Scottish were the first immigrants to arrive in Barre followed by the Italians.



(LS05087) Barre stone cutters in 1890.

Only 28% of Barre's native population worked in the quarries. In contrast, nearly every foreign born inhabitant of Barre was employed in the industry.



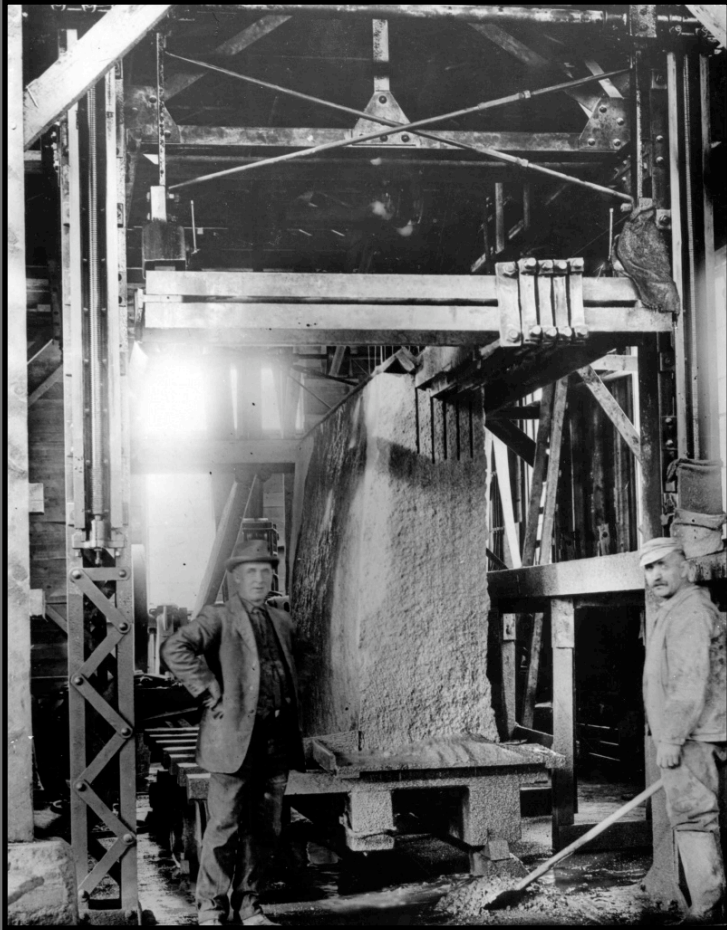
(LS02201) Workers in 1895.

The stone cutting process required highly specialized individuals. Most of the Scottish immigrants had been trained in granite region near Aberdeen and therefore possessed necessary skills.

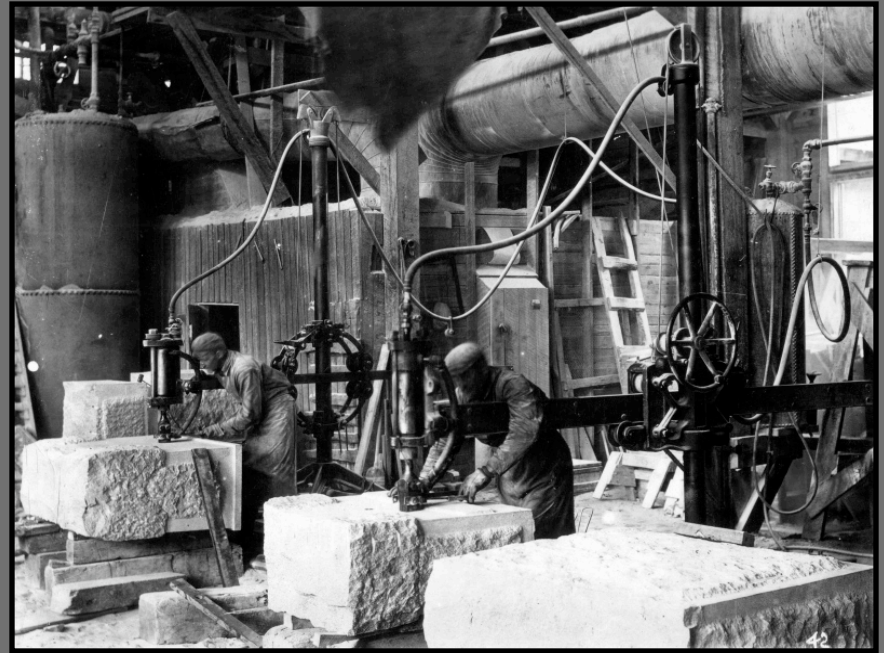


(LS06730) Stone cutting techniques circa 1900.

The art of stone cutting and carving...



(LS02215) Cutting a large piece of granite circa 1900.



(LS02216) Workers using surfacing machines in 1920.



Immigrants from Europe greatly impacted the cultural landscape of Barre. They organized social and political gatherings and remained close to their native traditions. They formed their own neighborhoods and were particular to their own merchants and markets.

(LS09903) Statue of Robert Burns, a Scottish poet, carved by Scottish immigrants in Barre circa 1899.



The craftsmanship of the immigrants is still visible in the architecture of Barre's Main Street.

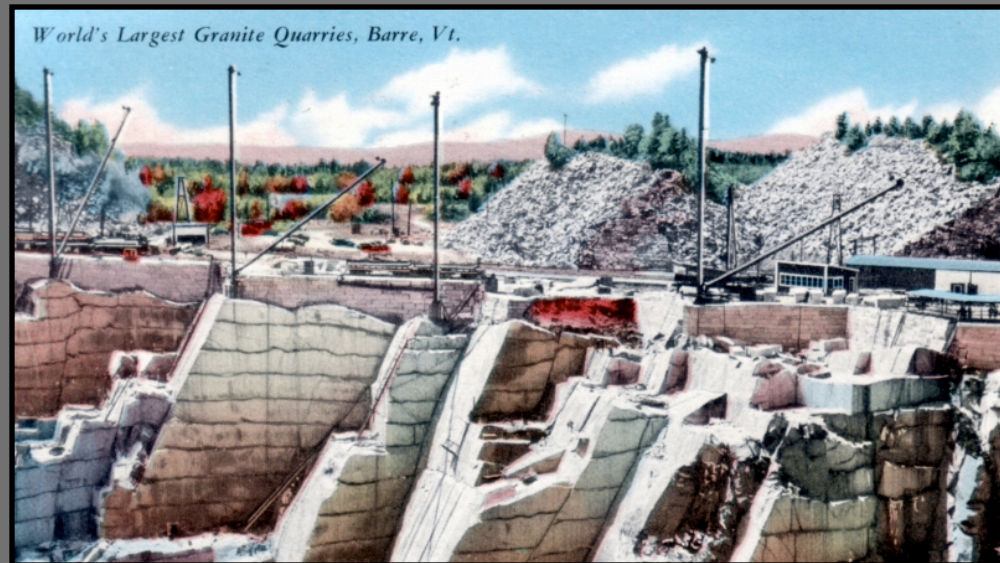
(LS10147) A view of Main Street in Barre as it appeared in 1910.

It is estimated that nearly half of all working women in Barre took in immigrant workers to room and board between 1880 and 1910. The opportunity to take in boarders could increase a family's income by 25%.



(LS10991) A Barre farmhouse circa 1890.

The rise of the granite industry in Barre was responsible for a huge spike in population, the arrival of many foreign born immigrant workers, and the development of the town and transportation networks. Prior to the surge of the industry, Barre was a quiet Vermont town of barely 2,000 inhabitants. Within a few decades that population had increased to nearly 12,000 making it one of America's important economical centers.



(LS11467) Postcard promoting the world's largest granite quarry

Then
Now

and



(LS01428) Aerial view of Barre, 1927

(LS01478) Aerial view of Barre today

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