

# MARBLE WAS FORMERLY IN GREAT DEMAND

## The Gouverneur Quarries, About to Be Re-opened, Once a Beehive of Industry

GOVERNEUR, May 15.—Negotiations started following the recent purchase of the old St. Lawrence Marble company property by J. J. Sullivan of this village for the re-opening of the properties has recalled to many of the older residents of Gouverneur and vicinity the former days when the marble industry made Gouverneur the mecca of the North Country.

For more than thirty years Gouverneur enjoyed prosperity largely because of the activity of its marble industry. There were few periods of depression in the marble business and year after year there was a steady and constant influx of labor, always on the increase. It was absorbed by the marble quarries largely, although the prosperity in this line had its effect on other operations then active and they, too, took care of many hands who otherwise would have gone to other sections.

Gouverneur prospered to an extent never dreamed of since. It was a hive of activity and continued so until there occurred a general falling off in business.

Men worked for 12 hours each day for wages ranging from \$1 a day for the unskilled common labor to \$2.50 to \$3.00 for the more skill-

ed occupations. There was never a time when there was not a long waiting list and day laborers were glad to get the opportunity to earn these wages.

At one time it was estimated that the quarries alone were carrying a weekly payroll of some \$2,200 to \$2,500, all of which came from outside territory and most of it to be spent within the village with village merchants.

Several varieties of stone were quarried all of which found ready market. The work was continuous from year to year and in winter when other operations showed a slight let-up, the quarries were operating at capacity and the steady stream of money poured into this small village making it one of the most prosperous communities in northern New York. Other villages were jealous of Gouverneur's opportunities, but year after year the marble industry grew until it rivalled the leading quarrying sections of Vermont.

The slackening did not occur until about 18 years ago when the market suffered a set back. Other substances began to crowd out the marble in the building of large structures and as a consequence, only one of the many marble quarries of Northern New York survived, the Gouverneur Quarry, now operated by Morris A. Eckmann of this village.

One after another the quarries were abandoned by their owners for one reason and another until the quarrying business finally reached a low ebb. At present the Eckmann quarry is the only one in operation. The St. Lawrence has remained idle until shortly after the death of Joseph C. Callahan, lessee, in 1918. Since then it has laid idle and the property recently was sold by the owners, Belding & Company, to J. J. Sullivan, who has started operations at the quarry

with the prospect of re-opening.

Some of the quarries, even when business was at its best, suffered reverses. One story is told by the old-time quarrymen here of how one company which had struck a rich vein of marble nearly was doomed as the result of a short-sighted contract made with a western representative. The marble had met with popular demand and was bringing an excellent price. The greatest demand appeared to come from the middle west and arrangements were finally made with a mid-western marble jobber to handle the selling of the stone in several states in that immediate section where the stone appeared most popular. He flooded the local quarry with orders. Finally, however, the order dropped off almost precipitately and eventually the market had been entirely eliminated. Operations continued at the local plant and within a short space of time great volumes of the finished stone laid on almost every available spot of the quarry's property. The docks had been filled and the surrounding grounds piled high with cut stone awaiting a market.

A hurry call was finally sent to the western representative. Upon his arrival he explained that no sales could be arranged as there was no demand. However, he agreed to take the marble from the company's hands at a figure greatly under what the company had been receiving and the bargain was sealed. Later it was discovered that the western market had been eager for the marble, but the agent had been withholding the stone to create just such a situation. He found a ready market for his newly acquired supply and the company suffered the loss.

Other interesting tales are told of the early operations of the Gouverneur marble quarries and of the hardships which many of them endured in their struggles.