

EPILOGUE

On December 31, 1929, the era of the Hummelstown brownstone industry came to an end, an industry so prosperous that it employed as many as 600 men at its zenith. The early Pennsylvania German settlers reposing in the small, stone walled cemetery adjacent to Quarry Road little dreamed that this outcropping of Triassic sandstone, which probably hampered their plowing, would some day make an indelible mark on American architecture.

The Berst Family, as well as the Haehnleins and Browns must be given much credit for launching the enterprise. Nevertheless, it is Allen Walton and his capable sons Allen K. and Robert who deserve the greatest accolades for establishing the business on a grand scale, and making it one of the most respected and influential brownstone operations of its day.

Today when scouring the area of the quarries little is to be found that would indicate the scope of the operation. Some ruins of the second brick plant are all that remain in the form of building structures and the quarries have been reclaimed by wooded areas and water. Residential development has engulfed the 1000 acres originally owned by the Hummelstown Brownstone Company, and few of the inhabitants have any concept of the major contribution that these pits made to the American building scene.

Perhaps this accounts for the cavalier attitude many have regarding the preservation of the architectural treasures springing from these holes in the ground. Altoona High School, Harrisburg High School, the Bullitt Building in Philadelphia, the Everett Mansion in Cleveland, Ohio, the Col. Fellows Mansion in Montclair, New Jersey, etc. are but a few of the architectural gems that have been lost.

The extent to which a community is willing to assume indebtedness to save and preserve a structure varies greatly from one area to the next. Affluent communities have been known to obliterate historic structures that were of seminal importance while other less fortunate towns have sacrificed much to preserve a treasured building. The latter is

the case in Mannington, West Virginia, where the Presbyterian Congregation launched a refurbishing project for their church at a projected cost of \$500,000.00. The roof



I-1: Presbyterian Church – Mannington, West Virginia

line of the edifice had sagged five inches and had to be raised which necessitated removing all of the floor boards on the main level and jacking up the roof from the basement level until structural reinforcement could be installed to hold the roof in the proper position. All of the stained glass windows had to be removed and sent to New Jersey to be completely re-leaded, cleaned and repaired. These were but two of the numerous jobs that had to be done to restore the church to its original beauty and soundness --- for a building that many would have been tempted to raze. The greatest irony is that the original cost of the edifice was probably in the vicinity of \$40,000.

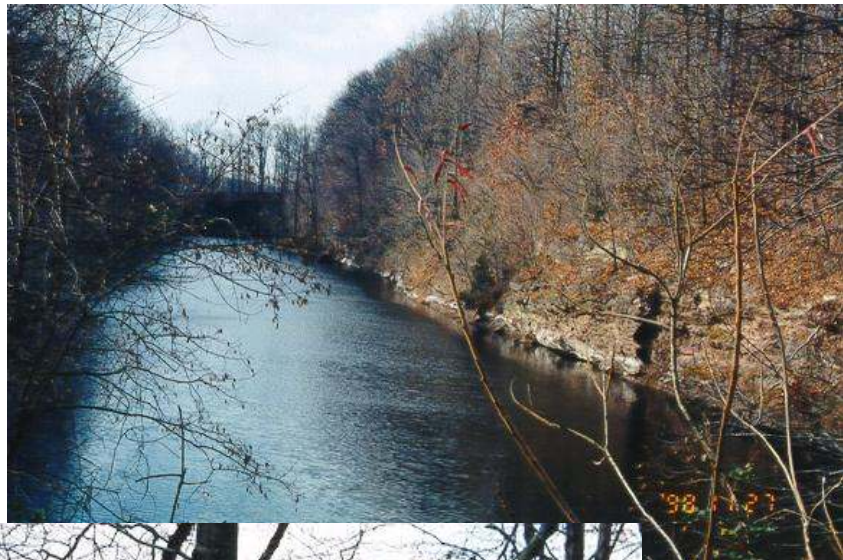
Consequently, one can only hope that we all become more aware of the history surrounding us and make every effort to preserve these structures for future generations. The quarries of Portland, Connecticut, have recently been declared a National Historic

Landmark, and in February of 2003 the quarries of the Hummelstown Brownstone Company were placed on the National Register of Historic Places. This is certainly a step in the right direction. May we all follow this lead and do all that we can to promote and encourage curiosity and appreciation for the remarkable history that is ours.

I-2: These photographs were taken in November of 1998.

Top – Abandoned quarries #1 & #3

Bottom – Abandoned quarry #4



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