

“A Large Paving Stone”

(Quarried in at Barreville, New York for the residence
of Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt on Fifth Avenue, New York)

In *Scientific American*, Vol. XLV, No. 10
New York, September 3, 1881, pp. 153



This article, which begins on the next page,
is presented on the Stone Quarries and Beyond web site.

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“The largest stone slab ever quarried in the United States has recently been placed before the new residence of Mr. W. H. Vanderbilt on Fifth avenue. The stone measures 25 feet 2 inches by 15 feet, and is 8 inches thick. It weighs about 44,000 pounds. It was quarried at Barreville, Sullivan County, N. Y., and the block from which it was cut is described as perfectly level, and about 90 feet long and 19 feet in width. From this surface the block was cut out and then raised by wedges. In this instance the seam was so open that the stone was raised without difficulty, and what was unusually gratifying to the contractors was the perfectly clean and level bed below, which required comparatively little dressing. The block could have been made 35 feet in length, but the great weight would have made its transportation very risky. As it was, a great deal of difficulty was met in bringing it to this city. It was first rolled down a hill a distance of half a mile to the river bank, and then placed edgewise in a canal boat especially arranged to receive it. The canal boat brought it to the foot of West 13th street, in this city, when it was taken out by one of Delamater’s floating derricks and placed upon the deck of the derrick. From 13th street the derrick was towed to the foot of West 51st street, where the stone was lifted out and placed upon two trucks built for the occasion, and capable of carrying 35 to 40 tons. Six teams of horses hauled it to its present resting place. The risk in handling such a block of stone is very great, as a sudden jar or fall would be apt to break it. It was estimated that it would cost from \$5,000 to \$6,000 to duplicate it.

“Aside from this monster stone, the others that have already been placed in position are of no ordinary size. Nineteen blocks, including the one already described, serve to make up the entire front of Fifth avenue, between 51st and 52d streets. The others average from 12 to 13 feet in length and 15 feet in width. These large pavements are all laid upon three parallel walls of solid rock, which is something of an innovation in its way. It has usually been the custom to rest them upon beds of sand, but it is frequently the case that the sand falls away and the stone falls with it, or, failing to do so, is very apt to break. The present method was expected to do away with any possibility of breaking. Other large stones have been employed in this building, among them the step from the sidewalk at the entrance on Fifth avenue, one of the largest of its kind; it is a fine blue stone, 24 feet 2 inches in length, 3 ½ feet wide, and 13 inches deep.”

*(See the next page for a photograph of the Vanderbilt residence once located on
Fifth Avenue in New York.)*

“Vanderbilt Mansions, New York” The photograph below is of the Vanderbilt Mansion that was once located on Fifth Avenue in New York City. It is a part of the A. D. White Architectural Photographs Collection at Cornell University Library. Detailed information about the photograph is available at following link:

<http://www.flickr.com/photos/cornelluniversitylibrary/3678974152/>

Information about the Vanderbilt residences is available in the “Vanderbilt houses” section of Wikipedia.

http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vanderbilt_houses

