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RESCUING HISTORY THROUGH RECLAIMED STONE



FOR "GREEN" CONSTRUCTION, RECYCLING IS GOOD BUT REUSING IS BETTER. THE REED BROTHERS OF OLDE NEW ENGLAND GRANITE HAVE DEVELOPED A BUSINESS BASED ON THIS PHILOSOPHY, RECLAIMING HISTORIC GRANITE FOR USE IN LANDSCAPING, BUILDING AND MANY OTHER PROJECTS.

On the two-acre "Granite Farm" located in the scenic town of Lynnfield, Mass., builders, landscapers, architects, homeowners and even occasional television and film personnel can wander around and look at the wide range of stone material – much of it from the 1800s – that has been salvaged. There are cobblestones from abandoned railway yards, foundation blocks from bridges, columns and hand-split posts from New England mills and much more. All have the weathered and antique colorations of reclaimed stone and many still feature the marks of the people who created them.

"I like to think we're not just reclaiming the material but rescuing it," said Biz Reed, COO and Executive Vice President of Olde New England Granite. "So much unwanted granite is crushed or ends up in the landfill. All those beautiful pieces of history that the quarrymen worked so hard on shouldn't be lost."



Olde New England Granite supplied the reclaimed granite block and cap material to form this beautiful and functional retaining wall and steps.

IN THIS ISSUE

In our cover feature, Olde New England Granite excels at sourcing and reclaiming tons of granite history

April Lufriu celebrates a world-class victory as Mrs. World

Torin Dixon visits Colorado Yule Quarry

Polishing Pro classes in natural stone and ES launched at Braxton-Bragg

New Stone industry products

Lynn University Remembrance Plaza dedication

The latest trending news as reviewed by Anne, Carmen, Ida Mae and Rufus

Biz Reed and his brother Wesley Reed did not start out with plans to collect reclaimed stone. It grew out of their original landscaping and hardscaping business.

"We started a little landscaping business doing mowing and that sort of thing in 1966," said Biz. "We were just kids in high school and called ourselves Reed Brothers Enterprises." After they both went to college (and Wesley went on to become a dentist), the business grew and became the Reed Corp. It is a family business, with Wesley as President and their other brother Mark involved, in addition to their father, when he was still living.

The brothers got into the reclaimed stone business, in a roundabout way, following the advice of their father. He encouraged them about fourteen years ago to downsize the company and get involved with excavation and septic installation since it is not as seasonal.

"My father was a wise man," Biz said. "He

always told us, 'You have to have a product. You can't make it on labor alone.' He died two years ago but he's still with us every day. He's the main reason we're where we are today."

The Reed brothers followed their father's advice at an opportune time. Because of changes to New England's codes around that time, many groundwater septic systems needed to be elevated to be compliant. The Reed brothers' experience in both landscaping and septic installation was a good blend for this work. They had the skills to elevate the systems and the ability to make them look nice.

A big part of this work was developing elevated leaching fields, and they found that constructing retaining walls using reclaimed granite blocks worked well. They started searching for this type of reclaimed stone for these projects and their customers embraced the concept.

"Engineers endorsed it to retain, terrace and

by Liz McGeachy

PHOTOS SUPPLIED COURTESY
OLDE NEW ENGLAND GRANITE

blend new elevations into the landscape and the clients loved it because it was historic and had a New England look," Biz said. "This became our niche."

Most of the stone they were finding was Rockport granite quarried in the mid-1800s up into the early 1900s in the Cape Ann area. At first they relied on other suppliers to find the granite, but they soon had all but exhausted their supply. They decided to strike out on their own and began talking to demolition contractors and road and bridge contractors about reclaiming old granite from their projects. Their supply of reclaimed material grew.

Continued on page 2

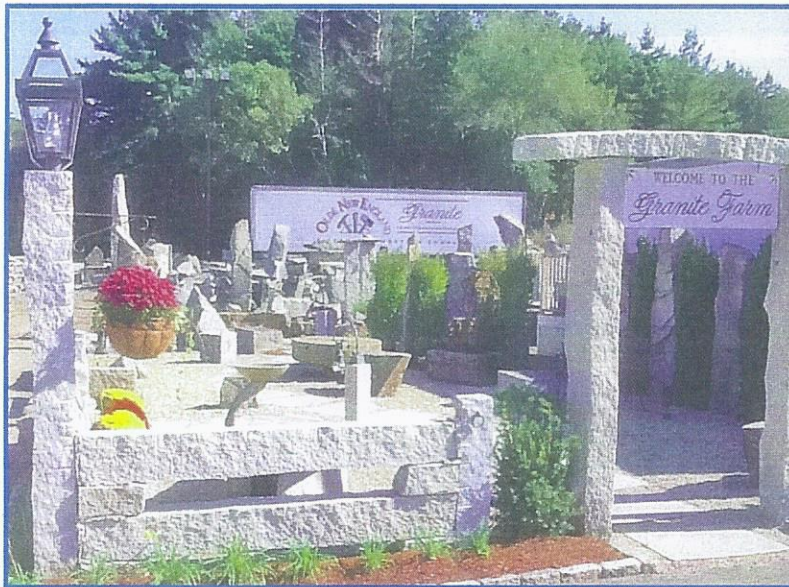
OLDE NEW ENGLAND GRANITE RESCUES HISTORY THROUGH RECLAIMED STONE

Continued from page 1

"Then about four years ago we were at the point where we said, 'We have all this wonderful material and we'll never be able to use it all ourselves, so why don't we open it up to the market?'"

That's when they opened Olde New England Granite. The spot where they keep the granite used to be a horse farm, which is why Biz start-

Below: The entrance to the two-acre "Granite Farm" located in Lynnfield, Massachusetts, where builders, landscapers, architects, homeowners and even occasional television and film personnel can wander around and look at the wide range of stone material – much of it from the 1800s – that all has been salvaged and is waiting to be repurposed.



ed calling it the Granite Farm. It's an appropriate name, since the range of material continues to grow. Though their main focus is New England, the business has shipped stone all across the United States.

Another gift the Reed brothers' father gave to them was an interest in antiques. That interest carries over into the reclaimed granite business. At each project site where they will be gathering stone, they document the original use with plenty of photographs and as much historical data as they can collect.

One recent project was the Essex-Merrimac Drawbridge in Amesbury, Mass. This drawbridge was constructed in the late 1800s and included three pier columns, constructed entirely with dimensional granite blocks weighing up to four tons. The bridge was rebuilt in the 1960s over the original stone piers. When it was damaged in a 2008 barge collision it had to be replaced, which meant a treasure trove for Olde New England Granite.

"We like to learn about the history of the material and where it came from and always take lots of photographs," said Biz. "Our clients like to see these too. It adds to the appeal."

Some clients want the stone in its original state, but with much of this pier block material, they are fabricating it into a wide variety of products. Stair treads, landings, 2-inch paving and fireplace surround material are a few of their Rockport granite sawn and thermaled products. Throughout the fabrication process they try to keep the aged sides in their original state which

Right: Blocks reclaimed from the Essex-Merrimac Drawbridge granite piers have found a new purpose as retaining wall material. Reclaimed granite curbing and a half mill stone unearthed on this property add to the antique look.

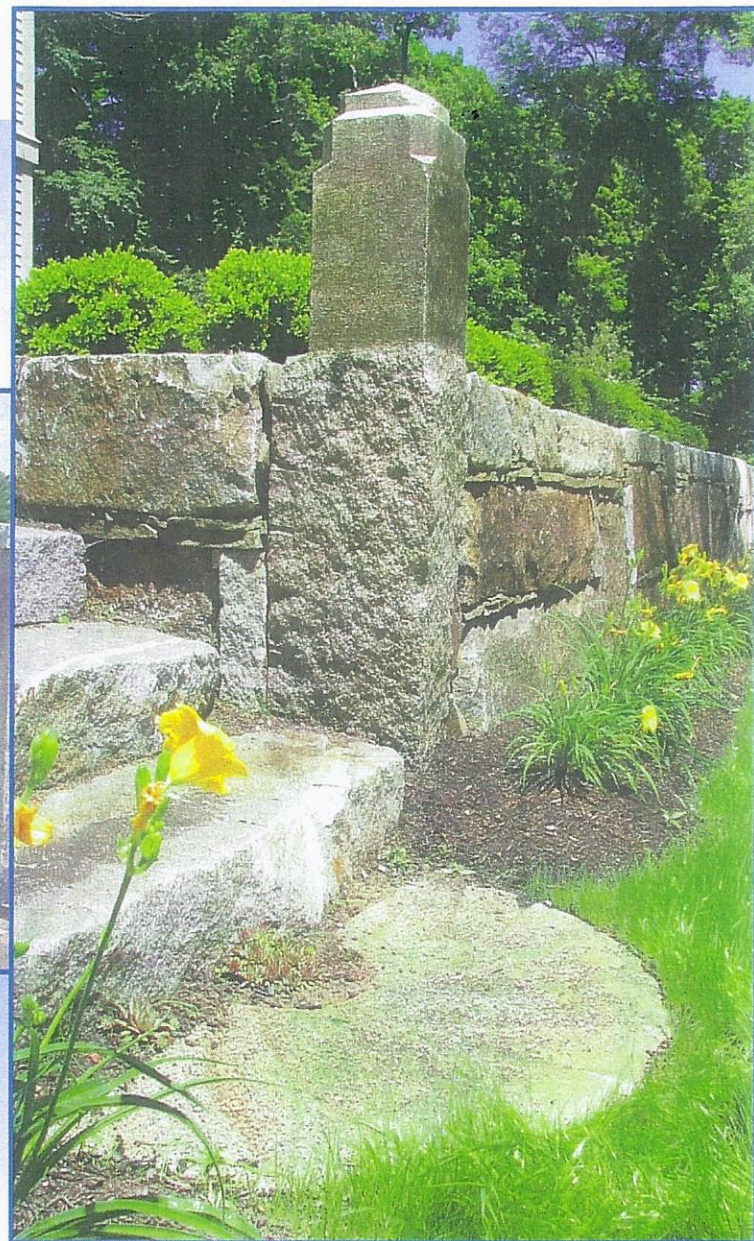
Right, below: Olde New England Granite still does some landscaping and hardscaping installation projects, like these graceful, shallow steps with border plantings, but for Biz Reed, especially, the focus is now on securing and reclaiming historical stone.

helps to maintain the vintage look as well as keep their history intact.

Noble and Greenough School recently used Olde New England Granite in the renovation of their boarding school in Dedham, Mass. Their buildings included stonework done in the late 1800s, and they needed to match the specific seam face granite from this era. The drawbridge pier blocks were a perfect match.

Old New England Granite material was also used on a recent episode of the television show "This Old House." The show was redoing a 300-year-old historic home in Bedford, Mass., and needed several large pieces of reclaimed granite for their front entry. They wanted to match the rugged look of the house, so they visited the Granite Farm. The giant granite landing and accompanying steps that they used for their front entryway came from the Essex-Merrimac Drawbridge pier blocks.

Biz said one of the interesting parts of his job is that he never knows who will be calling him each day. The set designer for the Hollywood



movie "Crooked Arrows" called him last summer wanting stones for an outdoor scene being filmed near Boston. She came and looked around the farm and picked out the stones she liked. They packaged them up and sent them to the set as a rental. The stones were returned when the shooting was finished.

Olde New England Granite still does some landscaping and hardscaping installation projects, but for Biz, especially, the focus is now on securing and reclaiming historical stone.

"Our audience is so wide and varied: engineers; architects; landscape, hardscape and mason contractors; remodelers; homeowners; movie designers and many more in between," he said. "A lot of our clients are interested in the environmental aspect of reusing stone. It's gray but it's also green. It saves energy and landfill space, but it also saves a little bit of history. We're excited to be doing that."

For more about Olde New England Granite visit www.oldenewenglandgranite.com.

