

*Large bluestone
slab (12' x 15')*
*Outside of
Woodstock
c. 1900*



BIG STONES

Up to the late 1800s Woodstock quarrymen sent few very large slabs of bluestone out into the world. Most of the flagstones produced in the town's quarries were of the size still in use on the sidewalks of many village and city side streets up and down the Atlantic Coast. But the time came when there was a demand for big stones, perhaps twelve by fourteen feet and five inches thick. Urban millionaires used these stones as sidewalks in front of their mansions. These status symbols testified by their size and smoothness and five to ten tons of weight to the power and wealth of the men who had paid to have them quarried, transported and laid in place.

Woodstock quarries tried to outdo each other in the size of the stones they quarried. The Snake Rock quarries (there the Stoutenbergh quarry was sometimes called the Giant quarry because of the size of its stones), the Lawson and Ingram quarry in Shady, the Vandebogart quarry and the California quarry all produced big stones. As the big-stone fever mounted, the departure of a big stone from its quarry became a matter of public rejoicing.

The late Ben Snyder remembered the day when a big stone left the California quarry with its stonemasons riding on the huge slab, smiling and waving at the men and women, children and dogs who walked alongside singing, barking and cheering. Arriving at the old

*The Fitch Brothers
Bluestone office in
Wilbur, restored*



hotel, once the Brinkerhoff House, the stonecutters and teamsters entered the barroom and were treated like heroes. They could barely stagger out to their horses again.

Country newspaper proudly printed the dimensions of especially big stones. They reported early in 1881 that William H. Vanderbilt had offered his agent \$10,000 for a single “flagstone twenty-five feet long and fifteen feet wide” for the sidewalk in front of the block-long and graceless mansion he was building on New York’s Fifth Avenue. The stone had to be “without flaw.”

It was said that a stone weighing twenty tons hauled from Woodstock to the Bigelow dock at Malden by seventeen horses broke down every bridge on the route. On July 1, 1881 the New York Times reported that a stone twenty-five by sixteen feet weighing twenty tons had been hauled to the Fitch Brothers dock at Wilbur, destined for William H. Vanderbilt’s sidewalk. Another stone thirty-seven by fifteen feet had been quarried “but was broken while being trimmed.” The origin of these stones was not given. They could well have come from Woodstock.²

Bluestone quarrying was a big industry in the West Hurley, Glenford and Morgan Hill areas of the Town of Hurley. Much of the bluestone was used in New York City, primarily for curbing. Hurley bluestone was used in building the Brooklyn Bridge. Wagon loads of stone going from the quarries to the barges at Kingston often weighed over 18 tons. Some single stones were so large they required eight teams of horses to move them. The largest single bluestone to