



THE HISTORY OF
GEORGIA MARBLE

AMERICA'S TRUE
STONE SOURCE

Georgia Marble. An American tradition.

For thousands of years, marble has been man's first choice above all other stone when challenged with creating masterpieces of architecture, sculpture and memorials. No other material combines the permanence and workability of marble with the exquisite beauty of the stone itself, ranging in varieties from brilliant white to midnight black with tints and veinings of almost every hue.

What follows is the story of Georgia Marble and its beauty and unique physical properties that makes it the durable of marbles. We also share with you the story of Georgia Marble's sole producer, The Georgia Marble Company.

Journey from the bottom of the sea.

Georgia Marble began its formation at the bottom of the sea - a sea that covered North Georgia 600 million years ago.

Tiny sea animals lived and died there by the trillions. Being composed of calcium carbonate, their remains over the eons, gradually built up a reef, or bank thousands of feet thick, of calcium carbonate that rose above the level of mud and sand around it, keeping the carbonate virtually pure.

Over many eons of time, the entire reef was buried under thousands of feet of sediment and was transformed into limestone by the tremendous pressure.

Then, about 450 million years ago, a series of great upheavals buckled the reef and thrust it deep into the Earth's crust. Heat and pressure transformed it into a unique marble with sparkling calcite crystals.

An upheaval occurred around 60 million years ago, forcing the huge deposit of Georgia Marble to the Earth's surface. The Cherokee and Etowah Indians used it in native crafts.

The stone that sparkles.

Bright sunshine filtered through the pine trees, mottling the earth with an ever-shifting pattern of light and shadows. An outcropping of white stone sparkled in the sunlight as if thousands of diamond chips were embedded in its surface.

Henry T. Fitzsimmons was fascinated by the pure white brilliance of the stone. He explored the outcropping eagerly, knocking off chunks to study color and hardness, stepping back to judge the size of the deposit. As an itinerant Irish stonemason, he quickly identified the outcropping as an exceptionally fine specimen of pure marble.

So it was that in 1835, less than 20 miles from the site of our nation's first gold rush seven years earlier at Dahlonega, Ga, the world's richest deposit of white crystalline marble was discovered in the region known to the Cherokee Indians as "Long Swamp Valley."

In 1838, Mr. Fitzsimmons began operations. He opened his quarry and marble works at the location now known as Marble Hill, Ga. By 1842 he had built a mill and was crafting marble into monuments. His extent of trade was limited because deliveries were made by ox cart. The extraordinary beauty of the monuments his skilled hands fashioned from this unique sparkling stone foretold the wide demand for Georgia Marble as a medium for artistic expression for centuries to come.



Georgia Marble Quarry, circa 1980

Georgia Marble becomes an industry.

Fitzsimmons quarried and worked marble at his original site and later built another mill near Jasper, Ga, but his enterprises lasted only a few years.

A few other companies engaged in marble production in the area before and after the Civil War with limited success. But because of their efforts and observations of others, news of the large marble deposits in Georgia spread to the North. In about 1880, an evaluation of the commercial value of the marble deposits in Long Swamp Valley startled the world.

Geologists and consultants soon confirmed a vast deposit of marble under the fertile farmland. Not only was this deposit the world's largest; the marble proved to be denser and more durable than any other produced in America. Furthermore, it was found that no other domestic marble contained large flat crystals that added the unique dimension of beauty created by reflected light.

Hardy entrepreneurs had created an infant marble industry in the North Georgia hills. Now, what this industry needed was a well-financed, well-managed company to lead in the development of this fabulous natural resource.

The Georgia Marble Company... beginning of an era.

Two strangers, facing the monotony of a train ride west, struck up a conversation in the time-honored tradition of fellow travelers. They introduced themselves: Frank H. Sidall of Philadelphia was a millionaire soap manufacturer looking for investments in the "New South," who had heard of Georgia's marble

deposits; H.C. Clement was a man thoroughly knowledgeable about marble.

Their mutual interests brought them to Georgia, where they were instrumental in founding The Georgia Marble Company in May 1884, with Mr. Clement as president. The new company gained control of 7,000 acres, arranging a mineral lease on properties belonging to members of the Tate family, whose possession pre-dated Fitzsimmons discovery by a few months. The company then built a branch railroad to the main line of the Marietta and North Georgia Railroad and started operations in the quarries and mills. For the first time, rail transportation made it possible to open up broad new markets for Georgia Marble's use in buildings as well as private memorials.

The Georgia Marble Company began an extended period of expansion in 1915 that made the next 45 years a record period of growth in production, facilities and sales of both memorial and building stone.

The first step was the acquisition of all quarries and finishing plants operated by other companies in North Georgia. By 1916, The Georgia Marble Company had bought The Southern Marble Company and four more plant facilities at Marble Hill, Nelson, Ball Ground and Marietta. The Georgia Marble Finishing Works at Canton continued to operate independently. With the purchase of that company in 1941, The Georgia Marble Company became the sole producer and wholesale manufacturer of Georgia Marble.

Only memorial sales remained strong during World War II, but by 1945 orders were being received for structural marble again.

By the 1960s, The Georgia Marble Company was a giant of its industry worldwide. Its operations were fully integrated and coordinated; its



Buckingham Fountain, Chicago, IL



Georgia Marble History photo circa 1890



Cleveland Art Museum, Cleveland, OH



prospects for continued growth from increasing sales of traditional and new products were never brighter.

In the summer of 2003, The Georgia Marble Company was purchased by Polycor, a Canadian based firm, one of the largest and most diversified suppliers of structural dimension stone in all of North America.

Today, Georgia Marble Company is the world's largest producer of marble products. The company's marble deposits stagger the imagination. Even at the high current rate of production from its quarries in the Long Swamp Valley, it is conservatively estimated that there is enough Georgia Marble to last more than 3,000 years. Each variety is present in such abundance that any Georgia Marble now in use can be perfectly matched for future memorials, duplications or additions to existing buildings.

Extraordinary purity/ interlocking crystals

Georgia Marble is composed almost entirely (more than 98%) of one ingredient: calcium carbonate. This means that it is free of minerals and discoloring agents that could work from within to stain or discolor the material.

Georgia Marble's structure is purely crystalline, with no stratification and only traces of foreign material. The myriad crystals that distinguish Georgia Marble as "the stone that sparkles" also form an almost impenetrable barrier against moisture, dirt and discoloration.

Moisture absorption is the first step in the disintegration of a stone. Data from tests by the U.S. Bureau of Standards, the U.S. Geological Survey and independent labs verify the extremely low absorption rate of Georgia Marble.

This interlocking action of crystals has other advantages, as well. This density contributes to

the tremendous strength that enables one cubic foot of Georgia Marble to support a weight of almost 1,000 tons.

More reasons to select Georgia Marble

Whether Georgia Marble is being chosen to commemorate a family, individual or to clad a building, there is certain to be a color variety suitable for the purpose. Marble of soft white, blue mist, silvery gray and blue gray is readily available to memorialize a personality or dramatically accent an architectural design. Each variety is characterized by a distinctive clouding effect of complementary, contrasting color that makes Georgia Marble unique. The rich, deep beauty of Georgia Marble is majestic and everlasting. No chemicals or fillers are required to bring out its natural luster and crystalline sparkle as is necessary in most granites.

Sculptors, architects and stone craftsmen appreciate the exceptional qualities of Georgia Marble. They can execute the most ambitious project without the danger of running into material flaws that would render their design useless. The stone can be shaped, chiseled, given several finishes and inscribed with infinite skill and precision. Proof is evident in the growing number of large public and private memorials, monuments, sculptures and buildings that are made of Georgia Marble. Georgia Marble has been used in such prestigious and historic projects as The Lincoln Monument, The U.S. Capitol, The New York Stock Exchange and The Alamo Cenotaph. All of these reasons and more are why Georgia Marble has been one of the world's premier stone materials for so very long.



Acacia Mausoleum, Cleveland, Ohio



U.S. Capitol Building, Washington D.C.



New York Stock Exchange, New York, NY



Water Tower Place, Chicago, IL.