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APR 3 1934

# QUARRY POOLS CARRY THREAT TO SWIMMERS

## Deep Waters at Sullivan's Ledge Have Taken Many Lives

### HOLE IS 300 FEET DEEP

#### Story of Granite Quarrying Is Told by Former Owner

With warm weather and swimming days approaching, parents of North End boys are wondering with misgivings if the deep and murky waters at Sullivan's Ledge on Hathaway Road will claim more victims by drowning during the coming season. Meanwhile many a youth is awaiting the day when he will return to dive and swim in the pools of the ledges, a forbidden and dangerous pastime, but a most enjoyable one to him.

Almost every year the waters of the ledges where granite has been quarried deep into the earth claim a life and are the scene of innumerable near drownings. The history of the ledges dates back almost 100 years and even aged fathers who warn their sons of the dangers of the pools can remember the days when they swam in the same waters as boys.

#### Open First Ledge

Before the Wamsutta Mills were built, Abiathar Rogers started quarrying at the first ledge, which is the first near Hathaway Road and is now nearly filled. The property on which this long granite ledge stood, showing like the back of a whale above the ground, was part of the Terry estate. Realizing the granite of the ledge was of a high quality and would find ready sale as a building material, Mr. Rogers bought part of the property and started quarrying.

When Wamsutta Mills No. 1 mill was built in 1846, the stone used for the steam engine bed was granite from Mr. Rogers' quarry. The magazine at Fort Rodman was made of granite from the same source.

The late Richard Wilson opened the work on the second ledge, in the rear of the Rogers works. This part was also a portion of the Terry estate and was purchased by Mr. Rogers.

#### Start Third Quarry

About 1889 the firm of Brownell and Murkland, contractors, started operations on the third ledge. This site also was part of the Terry property. The contracting firm built the Bennett Mill, the Coggeshall Street Bridge and other structures here, and was well known. Moise Denault, now dead, was

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#### Pumps Soon Needed

"Granite comes in sheets or strata and a seam is a fissure between sheets. Starting at the top of the ledge, we kept working down and down. At a 12 or 14 foot depth we struck springs and had to install pumps to dry the quarry in order to permit operations.

"Our quarry was worked to a depth of about 300 feet. The deeper we went, the more water seeped into the hole so giant steam pumps had to be installed. Drillers, stonecutters, quarrymen and others, 125 in all, worked in our quarry when it was going full blast.

"With the other quarries in operation, the district was a scene of much activity. Derricks swung high overhead and dropped lines into the huge mouths of the quarries to come up with granite blocks weighing tons. These would be cut to the desired size.

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#### Granite Widely Used

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Break: 1313  
Other: newsclipping  
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Moise Denault, now dead, was owner of the fourth ledge, which he opened behind the other three. He bought the property from the late George Potter in 1892 and, when he died in 1902, his sons, Moise Denault Jr. and T. Arthur Denault continued the quarry work.

Mr. Rogers sold his quarry interests to the late John Bertrand in 1882, and in 1894 or 1895 Mr. Bertrand sold out to Jenney and Buffinton, masons and contractors. This company in turn sold to the late John B. Sullivan in 1906. Mr. Sullivan died in 1907 and his son, Mark E. Sullivan, who died here last year, took the business. He bought the Rogers quarry and in 1908 purchased the Denault quarry. The Brownell and Murkland quarry his father had acquired in 1897, after this firm had gone out of business.

#### Under One Ownership

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#### Granite Widely Used

"The foundations of nearly all the homes and mills built here while the quarries were in operation were built of granite from the ledge. St. Killian's Church, St. Lawrence's Church and part of St. Joseph's Catholic Church are made of granite from that ledge.

"That was the only worked ledge in the city in those days. Before that time some granite was cut from a ledge which was located behind where the Pierce Brothers Limited Mill is now situated.

"There were no drownings while the work at the quarries was going on because pumps kept them dry. But later when work was abandoned, the water rose and boys went there to swim.

"The quarries have all been worked to a depth of over 200 feet and ours went as low as 300, as I have said. When you get so low, the stone often runs in crooked grain and is not good."

#### Drownings Numerous

Drownings at the ledge have been a regular occurrence every year, usually during the Summer vaca-

ences, boys continue to come every year and swim in the quarry holes.

Some go regularly while others happen to come to pick cherries, nuts or hunt in the nearby woods and are unable to resist the temptation to go in for a swim on a warm day. In their birthday suits, the boys will dive in, the braver from high projecting rocks.

There is no denying that the feel of cool water against one's bare body is grand and glorious. That's why some boys play hooky and come to the ledge, little thinking of the dangers involved.

Some boy fails to return home in the evening and his parents report to the police. Companions say they saw him at the ledge. Then the police find his clothes on the rocky rim of the deep pool and the search for the body begins. It's an old story which repeats itself almost every year and has brought sorrow into many homes.

#### Thin Ice Takes Toll

Even in Winter, there have been drownings at the quarry pools when boys have ventured on the thin ice. No later than March 15, Robert Howard, 18, of 61 Willow Street, and James Brezell, 17, of

1933

source.

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#### Under One Ownership

Now Mr. Sullivan was owner of all four quarries in the great ledge. The various businesses in which he was engaged were incorporated in 1916 under the name of the Sullivan Granite and Construction Company. Mr. Sullivan became president and general manager. Mr. Sullivan died in March, 1933. About a year before his death, operations at the ledge had ceased due to the lack of construction work with granite. There has been no work at the quarries since. The Safe Deposit National Bank now owns the property.

Many important buildings of the city including churches, schools, mills, public buildings and hotels were made of granite from the quarries on Hathaway Road. Miles upon miles of curbstones and paving were taken from the ledges, also, as well as granite blocks for the erection of railroad bridges.

#### Tells of Quarry Work

Let one of the earliest surviving workers in the quarries, T. Arthur Denault of 2 Wamsutta Street, tell something about the history of the granite ledge here. His father opened the fourth quarry at Hathaway Road in 1892 and he worked there. He says:

"Granite was once widely used here and everywhere as a building material. But the use of cement in construction work has put the stone workers out of business. That was why we sold our quarry interests in 1908. By 1910 cement was being used most extensively instead of granite.

"When my father started the fourth quarry on Hathaway Road it was a ledge showing a little above the ground and extending deep into the earth. We first had to find a seam in the rock, drill holes in it and blast with black powder. By the way, black powder is used instead of dynamite in quarrying because it does not shatter and damage the stone, the force

it was going full blast.

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Drownings at the ledge have been a regular occurrence every year, usually during the Summer vacation. Despite the warnings of their parents against swimming there, hundreds of boys every year make the ledge pools their old swimming hole.

The last or fourth ledge is called the "baby hole" because it has a stone shelf which is about four feet under water where the smaller boys and weaker swimmers go. But the boy who ventures too far toward the center of the pool finds himself in over 200 feet of water.

#### Springs Cause Currents

Drownings there are frequent. Boys go out too far and are unable to regain the safety of the submerged rock shelf. The water is cold and filled with currents caused by springs. And when a swimmer goes down into the seemingly bottomless pit, he seldom comes up.

Many times have William S. Cushing and Peter P. Welch of the police department been called to the ledge to drag for bodies. Sometimes it is days before a body is recovered. Branches and wreckage at the bottom of the quarries often hold the corpse. (Some corpses have never been recovered.)

Several years ago a professional diver with his heavy apparatus had to be called into activity to recover a body of a drowned boy. Rescue operations are made difficult by the almost perpendicular walls of stone which rise from the water. One body was found under a submerged shelf of granite where it had remained for three days. Explosions of dynamite in the water had failed to move it.

#### Boys Are Persistent

In spite of all the deaths and the attempts of the quarry owners to prevent trespassing on their territory with warning signs and

ences, boys continue to come every year and swim in the quarry holes.

Some go regularly while others happen to come to pick cherries, nuts or hunt in the nearby woods and are unable to resist the temptation to go in for a swim on a warm day. In their birthday suits, the boys will dive in, the braver from high projecting rocks.

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#### Thin Ice Takes Toll

Even in Winter, there have been drownings at the quarry pools when boys have ventured on the thin ice. No later than March 18, Robert Howard, 16, of 61 Willow Street, and James Brezci, 17, of 303 Austin Street, were rescued by companions at the ledge when they fell through the ice making bends.

Many have spent happy and care-free moments at the ledges, even if these pools have been dangerous. Some have fished there by the hour, catching eels which have weighed as much as three and four pounds.

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