

Carves His Career in R. I.

From Italy Came Amelio Bernardo with Inherited Skill as a Stone-Cutter and He Rose to Top Rung of His Calling

FOUR generations of stone cutters preceded the arrival of Amelio into the Bernardo family at Coll' Alvoturno, Italy, a small village hiding in the mountainous hills half a hundred miles east of Naples. So when Amelio, upon completing grammar school, turned to the trade of his father, Vincenzo, and to that of his grandfather, and great-grandfather and great-great-grandfather, no one was surprised.

But when Amelio, 24 years old, married and with a boy of three to inherit his business, decided to give up everything and come to America, there was emphatic shaking of heads all through Coll' Alvoturno.

"No Work in America!"

"Where will you get business there?" his friends demanded. "The Americans do not live in stone houses, the barbarians. They live in temporary shacks, houses they call them, of wood. Besides, who will know Amelio Bernardo? Who will know that the Bernardos have been stone cutters since medieval times? When your wife and baby cry for food you will be sorry you left the business of your forefathers in Coll' Alvoturno!"

But Amelio Bernardo was determined. He had heard many men tell of the money to be made in America. So he left the business to his father and his brother, Serafino, and embarked for America.

He came to Providence in 1888 and got work in a quarry at North Providence. He might have found a place to live somewhere near the quarry. But he wished to be with his people. So he lived on Hassen street. The trolleys then ran only as far as the Branch avenue car barns, about a mile from his house.

Amelio had no nickels to spare. He would have to walk four miles from the quarry anyway, after leaving the trolley. So what was a mile more? He was young. And he walked.

He found the stone at the quarry far harder than the stone he had been working on in Italy. "But the pay! A good stone cutter was paid \$2.25 a day!"

Before Amelio had been there many days he found that he could do much more work than was expected of him. So, after some argument, he persuaded his boss it would be a good thing to put him on piece work.

Worked While Others Rested

He worked 10 to 12 hours a day. While his comrades were stretched out in the sun, still eating their bread and tomatoes, Amelio was back at work. And when the day was over he trudged the five miles back home.

"You kill yourself. Then what good your money do you? What your family do then, huh?" Amelio's friends at the quarry demanded.

But each month when he found that his pay envelope contained \$100 to \$115, while those of the "day workers" contained only \$60 to \$65, he felt encouraged to go along.

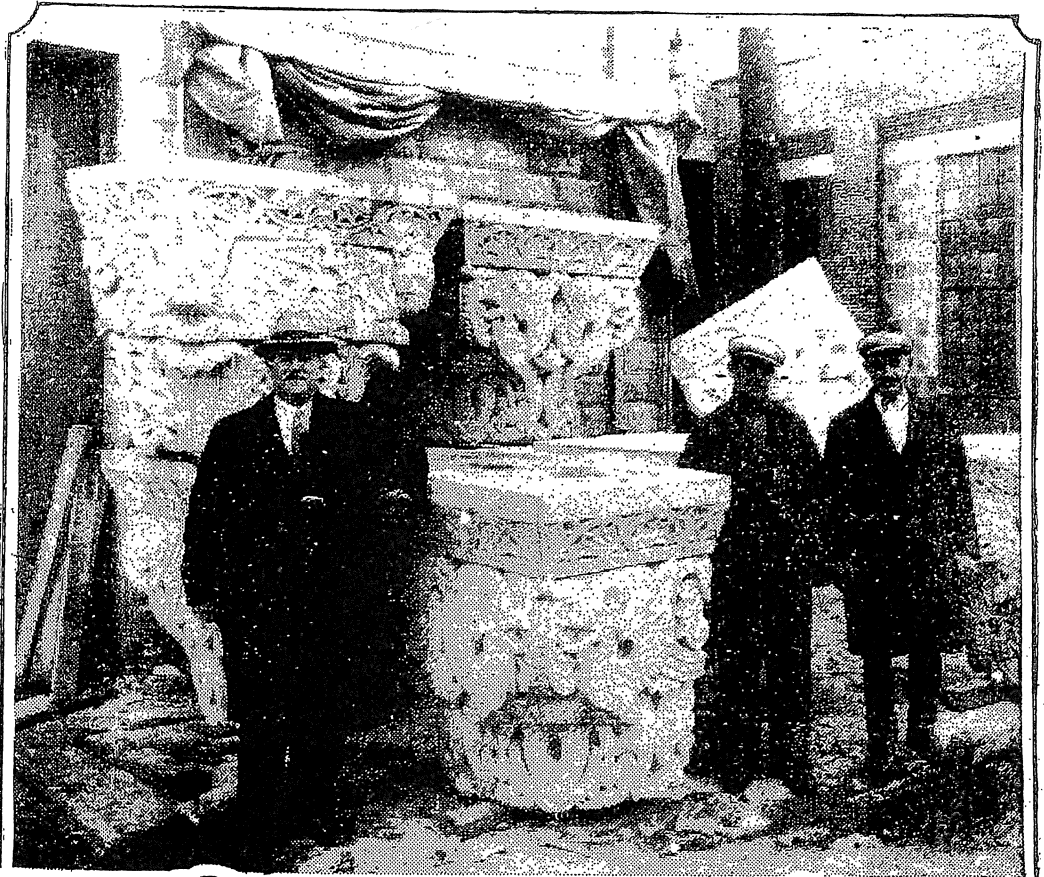
Then came bad days in 1900. Work was scarce. The quarry was closed. The only work Amelio could find was wood chopping, and not much of that. Frequently he and the boys had to go out picking huckleberries. The income from the sale of the berries was frequently all that was coming in.

Predictions Nearly Came True

During these days he frequently thought of what his friends back in Italy had told him; of their prediction that he might find hunger and distress, and not success, here in America. So, while occasionally he had to take something from the savings account he had been building, he redoubled his efforts to find work of any kind, at any payment, to keep from taking too much.

No matter how bad times might be then, he thought, they might become worse and he was determined he would not go back to Italy a failure.

Then the bad times passed, as they always do, and he found work again. Once more he began to add to the savings account. And all the time he was



Amelio Bernardo with his two sons, Anthony and Eugene

looking around for a chance to go into business for himself.

Final determination to risk his capital in getting into business of his own, he explains, came when he learned that a tailor was running a stone cutting business.

"If a tailor can run a stone business—even if he doesn't make much—I, who have always been in this work, and my father before me, ought to be able to do something," he told himself.

Buys Share in Business

He learned that John Tiangolo, one of three brothers conducting a stone cutting business on upper Kinsley avenue, was anxious to sell out. Although a third interest could be purchased for \$1100, the man insisted upon spot cash. Amelio had this much, so he became one of three partners in the Providence Granite Company.

It wasn't much of a business, but it was a business. The equipment consisted of a single hand derrick, a small plot of ground and a few small, old buildings, together with a very small stock of granite.

Every year new equipment was added and before many years had passed Mr. Bernardo had bought out the other two brothers, Carl and Andrew Triangolo. He had also sold the original site and moved farther down Kinsley avenue to a larger place beside a railroad spur—his present location, between and in back of the municipal incinerator and the big garage of the New England Transportation Company.

His first job, after he had acquired the business, was in cutting the granite for the Pawtucket fire station on North Main street. Then he got considerable work supplying granite curbing for Providence, Pawtucket and Central Falls.

He began to extend his operations in

1910 when he obtained a contract to supply the granite for the Park avenue viaduct in New York city.

Granite for Col. Greene's House

One of his biggest jobs was obtained 15 years ago when he obtained a contract amounting to around \$135,000 for supplying the granite with which Col. Edward H. R. Greene's big house at South Dartmouth, Mass., was built. The same work today, Mr. Bernardo declared, would cost twice as much. This contract, rated according to its original amount, is one of the largest Mr. Bernardo has obtained and, rated according to the value of the same work today, would be the largest he has obtained.

In recent years he has cut and supplied the granite for many big buildings throughout the north, eastern and middle western parts of the country.

He has supplied granite for buildings as far south as West Virginia and as far west as Missouri. A contract to supply the granite for one of the big army school buildings at West Point kept him busy for two years.

In recent years Mr. Bernardo has turned his attention more and more to preparing the huge capitols which surmount columns on buildings. The designs for these capitols, of course, are drawn by the architects. And that they may see the completed work, plaster molds are made at the places where the architects are in business. These molds are sent to Providence and the capitols carved here.

Makes Big Capitols

These capitols are carved out of blocks of granite weighing from three to 10 tons. At present Mr. Bernardo has a dozen completed pieces each weighing around three tons. Before the car-

ving was started the blocks weighed more than four tons.

Like many other manufacturers, Mr. Bernardo works under a handicap in Providence in contracting for heavy work. The capacity of the biggest crane at the Providence municipal wharf, where his stone is delivered in vessels, and where it is sent out, is 10 tons. Frequently he had had to turn away contracts because the stone would have been heavier than local facilities would care for.

One of the most interesting pieces of equipment at the Kinsley avenue plant is the huge gang saw with which blocks of granite are cut. As many as 15 slabs of granite can be produced from one block at one time.

The saw will take a block of granite 14 feet long and six feet square, weighing 42 tons—or 32 tons heavier than the municipal wharf facilities will permit him to receive.

The blades of the gang saw are more than 16 feet long, 14 inches high and half an inch thick. The teeth are eight-inch squares burned in with an acetylene torch.

These blades are dragged across the granite under pressure. However, the steel blades are not relied upon to do all the cutting. Chilled steel shot and water are constantly poured over the granite. The steel shot, getting between the blades and the stone, assist in the cutting operation.

A granite block six feet deep can be cut through in about twelve hours.

The plant employs from 25 to 50 men, about 35 now being engaged there. The business, Mr. Bernardo said, amounts to around \$200,000 a year.

Two of Mr. Bernardo's sons, Eugene and Anthony, are now associated with him in the business.