

DATE HISTORY of MARBLE COLORADO



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by Ruby Isler



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In the late 1870's, prospectors in search of gold were the first known white people to come into the Crystal River Valley, although it is possible that hunters had entered the Valley earlier.

During the time of the search for gold, the prospectors found outcrops of marble in several places near what was to become the Yule Quarry and Strauss Quarry. The Strauss Quarry was named after one of the original stockholders. Deposits of marble were discovered near the present site of Marble, Colorado by W.D. Parry, Sr. and his partners, G.D. Griffith and John McKay.

In 1880, the first white family by the name of Mobley settled at the present site of Marble, and built the first log house.

George Melton soon settled below the present town site at what has come to be known as the old Holland ranch. He built the first wagon road up the Crystal River Canyon.

In 1896, the Kelly brothers shipped the first commercial marble out of Marble. The Kelly brothers built a wagon road to the present Strauss Quarry, and set up a small cutting plant.

In 1898, a zinc and lead smelter was built, but operated only a short time as the ore from the nearby mines was not profitable enough to continue operations. The smelter was located near Marble and the mines extended about 2½ miles east of Marble on up and around Crystal.

In 1905 and 1906 the Colorado Yule Marble Company was operating with eight gang saws in the mill. The steam railroad was completed at that time. Marble was brought down by wagon until the company converted to the steam tractor.

The first train pulled into Marble on November 23, 1906, at 3 p.m. and continued operating until 1909, when the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company closed and the Vermont Marble Company took over. They bought the lease, the rolling stock and ran the entire line from Marble to Carbondale. There was no break in service.

The Crystal River Railroad was owned by the Colorado Fuel and Iron Company. Under lease the Marble Company laid tracks and rails between Carbondale and Placita and agreed to pay rent for use of the right-of-way between Placita and Marble to the Crystal River Railroad Company.

In 1907, the population of Marble was around 250 persons and a larger mill was built. This mill extended a quarter of a mile in length and was 100 to 150 feet in width. This was one of the largest single marble finishing plants in the world at that time. This plant had rooms where they sawed, polished and carved, when the contract called for such.

In 1909-1910, the electric trolley was built from the mill to the quarry which is 3 and 9/10 miles from the mill. Elevation at the mill is about 7950 feet, and between 9 and 10 thousand feet at the quarry.

A hydro-electric plant was installed to generate power from three different creeks. The electric plant was about one mile east of the mill site. This furnished the town, mill, trolley and quarry with electricity.

In 1912, a snow slide came down the mountain south of the mill, across the river and did a lot of damage to the mill.

In 1913, the Company had a marble wall built along the bank of the river on Mill Site to protect the mill from future snow slides.

At peak time between 1910 and 1915 there were between 1500 and 3500 inhabitants in Marble. Many homes were built—some modern, some not so modern.

The education part of Marble consisted of a high school and a grade school. These were built in 1910.

A Post Office, bank, hospital, several saloons, drug store, cafe, barber shop, Masonic Hall, movies, a jail and numerous other businesses of all descriptions were also located in Marble. The town even had a band.

The Grade School was later sold and salvaged. Following this, the High School served for all grades and as late as the 1930's, there were four teachers and a "principal or superintendent." At this time there were about 450 people in Marble and the Company was working around seventy or eighty men. Marble has had no school for several years. Donald Knight was the last teacher in Marble.

The Company had a traveling crane that worked over-head on a track. The railroad and trolley tracks ran beneath the crane. Marble was lifted from the trolley and transported to saws inside the mill. When finished, the marble was loaded on the train by the crane. Some of the piers are still standing that supported the crane.

Most of the stone cutters and finishers were Italians and Poles who had worked in marble quarries before coming to Marble.

There were numerous kinds of saws used in the mill gang-saws, cable saws, diamond saws and barrel saws to name just a few, also a fluting machine.

At peak times there were from 500 to 800 men working for the Company.

Around 1909-1910, the Yule Quarry and Mill was operating at full swing and did not cease operation until the later part of 1941.

LINCOLN MEMORIAL

Most of the Lincoln Memorial was made in the Marble Finish-Plant. There were 18 marble steps from the granite landing to the Memorial level. There were two marble inclines. The width of the marble steps are 80 feet, 3 inches. The 36 columns surrounding and supporting the outer portion of the structure and the two in the entrance are made from Colorado Yule Marble. Each is 44 feet from the bottom joint to the top of the cap. Each is composed of 11 drums excluding the cap.

The base is 7 feet 4 inches in diameter and each bottom drum weighs 23 tons. Most of the exterior marble is Colorado Yule marble. The structure contains 208,000 cubic feet and weighs approximately 17,056 tons.

The ground-breaking ceremonies were held February 12, 1914, the cornerstone laid February 12, 1915 and the completed memorial dedicated May 30, 1922. The statue itself is of Georgia marble.

In 1925, some of the west portion of the mill burned but the Company continued to work by doing some repair work and operated until the latter part of 1941 when they closed down for good.

TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER

When the marble for the Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was brought down from the quarry, it took approximately three days to take it from the quarry to the mill. A special carrier was made to carry the marble for the Tomb. Small wheels in front and back of the carrier were on a track, but the boxings would burn out, making it necessary for one of the machinists to make new

boxings frequently. The marble for the Tomb weighed around 56 tons when it was shipped out of Marble. Including the base die and cap it weighed 64 tons in all.

From Marble, the Tomb was taken to Vermont where the rougher carving was done. The fine carving was completed after it was placed in Arlington Cemetery.

Carved on the Tomb are three figures commemorative of the spirit of the Allies in the War. In the center of the panel stands Victory, on the right is a male figure symbolizing Valor and on the left stands Peace. The panel on the rear is inscribed as follows:

"Here rests in Honored Glory
An American Soldier Unknown but to God"

The Tomb was completed and opened to the public at 9:15 a.m., April 9, 1932. Cost of the Tomb was \$48,000,000. Total weight of the Tomb when finished was 64 tons.

Several buildings in the western United States have used Yule marble in their construction. Among them are:

The Annex to the Capitol in Denver
The Custom House in Denver
The Post Office in Denver
Cheeseman Park Memorial in Denver
Colorado National Bank in Denver
Interior of the Daniel & Fisher Tower, Denver
First National Bank of Portland, Oregon
Exterior and Interior of Merchants National
Bank of Los Angeles, California
Thatcher Memorial Vault in Denver
and numerous other buildings.

Crystal is six miles east of Marble. It was a mining town but is closed-in by snow in the winter. In summer several people stay there.

Redstone was a thriving town at one time. Coal was coked there and shipped to the C. F. & I. steel works in Pueblo, Colorado.

The mansion of J. C. Osgood and the Inn still stand as do a lot of homes that Osgood built before 1900.

The Crystal River Valley from Carbondale to Marble is one of the most scenic drives in Colorado. Traveling south from Carbondale, Mt. Sopris is on the left, and the road follows the Crystal River all the way to Marble. Leaving Redstone, between Redstone and Placita, Hays Creek Falls are on the right. At Placita, Chair Mountain is on the south. In Marble, Whitehouse and Treasury Mountains are southeast of the town, and to the east in the Sheep Mountains stands Nobly.

The nicest jeep trip is from Carbondale through Marble, up Crystal Canyon to Crystal, over Schofield Pass into Crested Butte, back over Kebler Pass, into Muddy Valley, over McClure Pass and back into the Crystal River Valley. It is a breath-taking trip which can be made in one day.

And when you come into the Crystal Valley, don't fail to see the famous Mansion and Inn at Redstone.

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