



MASSACHUSETTS CULTURAL COUNCIL
FOLK & TRADITIONAL ARTS PROGRAM

FIELDNOTES

Fieldworker(s) [(Initials) Name]: (K) Kathleen, (C) Condon

Accession Numbers:

KC-02-6-FN

Fieldnotes

- - -C

Audio recordings

KC-02-6-CS

Photographic documentation

- - -M

Additional materials

Initial Contact: 7/2/2002 Contact Date: 7/22/2002

Related Accession Numbers: KC-02-8, KC-02-5, - -

Individual/Group/Event: Photo examples of statuary in Milford cemeteries

Address: St. Mary's Cemetery (Cedar St.) and Sacred Heart Cemetery (7 East Main/Rt. 109)

City: Milford Zip: 01757 County: Worcester

Phone: Daytime: _____ Evening: _____

E-mail: _____ Website: _____

Contact person: _____

Title: _____

Location of Interview: Photos taken in above cemeteries

Street Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____ County: _____

Special Needs (including translation): N/A

Traditions documented on visit (traditional art/skills, occupational experience, ethnic or religious community): gravestone carving

Traditions noted for follow-up: None

Other Possible Contacts: There is a "Friends of St. Mary's Cemetery" organization.

Summary Description: Preliminary photos show historical statuary, including an Irish Round Tower (see below) in two Milford Catholic cemeteries. The "History of Milford, MA 1780-1980," published by the Milford Historical Commission in 1980, notes that local Italian craftsmen are responsible for much of the stonework in Milford cemeteries.

Background on Milford Pink Granite:

Milford Pink Granite was used not only in local buildings and shrines, including St. Mary's High School in Milford and much of the statuary in local cemeteries, but also many buildings of national import, such as Grand Central Station, the old Penn Station, and the 34th Street Post Office in New York City as well as New South Station and the Admiral Dewey Monument in Boston. There were originally many different granite companies, but a consolidation around 1888 formed Milford Pink Granite Company. The peak years of granite quarrying in Milford were 1884-1908, with the apex of activity taking place in the years between 1895-08 when a contract was secured to provide the stone for New York's Penn Station. Very little of the granite was cut in the form of statuary; most of it was used for decorative building cornices, walls or monument pedestals.

Towards the end of the 1800s Italians with stonecutting skills were recruited to work in the Milford granite cutting sheds, which were built alongside area railroad tracks so as to ease transportation. [Most all of the stonecutters who had worked in the Milford cutting sheds died in their 40s or 50s because of a respiratory ailment caused by stone dust.] The Italians largely displaced the earlier stonecutters, who were of Irish, Swedish and Anglo descent. In fact, they also displaced the Irish in residential areas, taking over a section called "the Plains" which had been settled by Irish beginning in the 1830s. At first the Italians attended St. Mary's Catholic Church in Milford, but in 1880 the Sacred Heart Church was established as Milford's Italian parish. Nevertheless, there are Italian gravestones in both cemeteries. By the 1930s demand for granite was waning, partially because of the economy and partially because tastes were moving away from this stone. One detail from an article in the Milford Daily News (9-17-88) recalls the fierce localism of stone cutters, especially in the face of decreasing opportunities. In 1936, the Granite Cutters Union staged a strike specifically because the Haskel granite quarry had hired "two workers that were not residents of Milford."

IRISH ROUND TOWER, St. Mary of the Assumption Cemetery, Milford
quoted from <http://www.irishheritagetrail.com/rtowermilford.html>

"Modeled after the impressive round tower in Glendalough, County Wicklow, Milford's Irish Round Tower is the only such structure in North America. Built of prized pink granite from Milford, the tower

stands 65 feet high and 50 feet in circumference (half the height of the Glendalough tower), and was built by Irish immigrants who had come to the Blackstone Valley Region to work in the quarries and on railroad construction. The tower was built for Reverend Patrick Cuddihy of Clonmel, Tipperary, who had been pastor of St. Mary's Church since 1857. St. Mary's Cemetery dates back to the 1830s and was one of the early Catholic cemeteries in Massachusetts.