



Sacramento Region Stone Carvers Timeline

1849 â?? **Israel Luce** arrives as a miner and quickly returns to his prior profession, stone carving. **Luce and Lovelandâ??s Marble Works** opens in late 1850. **Andrew M. Aitken** arrives from Scotland. Like Luce, he fails as a gold miner and returns to his native profession. Aitken has an interesting deformity, an extra thumb on his right hand.

1852 â?? Aitken and Luce become partners and launch **Aitken & Luce Pioneer Marble Works**. They struggle due to high cost and low availability of raw materials. All marble must be shipped around the horn from either Vermont or Italy.

1853 â?? Luce discovers a distinctive, blue-veined marble deep in the El Dorado County Forest. He launches Californiaâ??s first commercial marble quarry at a place called â??Indian Diggins,â?• 5 miles south of modern-day Omo Ranch. Indian Diggins marble becomes a sought-after premium product for large tombstones and ornamental architectural applications.

1855 â?? **P.J. Devine** opens Sacramentoâ??s 2nd marble works: â??**P J Marble & Stone Yard**.â?• Devine is Irish but grew up on the east coast of the United States.

1857 â?? Devine takes on his brother Thomas and changes his business name to â??**Devine & Brother Premium Marble Works**.â?• They specialize in mantles, sills, counter tops, etc., for affluent Sacramentans. Itâ??s good work when they can get it, but like the other stone carvers, grave markers pay the bills.

1860 â?? Devine discovers a snow-white marble on the Consumes River near Columbia. This white marble soon displaces Indian Diggins marble as the preferred stone for high-end applications.

1864 â?? **J.C. Devine** and his brother arrive. J.C., probably P.J.â??s cousin, forms â??**J.C. Devine & Brother**,â?• a partnership that lasts 22 years. The various Devines become more adventurous artists in stone, creating elaborate carvings for an affluent clientele. Meanwhile, more quarries produce more local marble, increasing supply and lowering the price of marble. More stone carvers arrive and focus on less expensive headstones for the masses.

1873 â?? **Frank N. Fish**, 26, forms â??**Frank N. Fish Marble Works**â?• with his two brothers, Anthony and Morris. Fish hails from the Azores. He is much younger than the others. He creates affordable, plain headstones.

1875-80 â?? **William Boyne**, a former Aitken and Luce apprentice, forms short-lived partnerships with **Thompson**, then **Brown**, then **Vosper**, all of whom are credited on his tombstones. Boyne carves affordable, modest sized headstones and markets them effectively all over California. Boyne drops the credits after 1880 and signs his work â??**W. Boyne & Co**â??.

1878 â?? Aitken partners with Frank N. Fish to become â??**Aitken & Fish Pioneer Marble Works**.â?• Luce partners with his son, John Coachman Luce to form â??**Israel Luce & Co.**â?• They secure commissions for large monuments and architectural pieces.

Epitaph â?? â??**The cobblerâ??s children have no shoes.**â?• The old saying captures the irony of these menâ??s lives. They dedicated their careers to memorializing others but never constructed monuments to themselves. Not one of these stone cutters mentioned was buried with a headstone or monument.



Interpretation by Mike Roberts, 2023

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Credits: Most of this came from the Sacramento Historical Society Golden Notes Vol 43, Number 3 Fall 1997 *Headstones of the Gold Rush Era* by L.M. Rossi. For more info about the many early California stone quarries and carvers, see Peg Perazzoâ??s deep dive on the topic: StoneQuarriesAndBeyond.org,

Category

1. Article

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