

ELMHURST HISTORY HIGHLIGHT: The Elmhurst-Chicago Stone Quarry

The Elmhurst-Chicago Stone Quarry got its start without much fanfare as an attempt to dig a well. Farmer Louis Graue was digging on his land for water and instead hit the limestone ridge that passed underneath Elmhurst. In 1883, a year after Elmhurst was incorporated as a village, farmer Adolph Hammerschmidt of Naperville and stone mason Henry Assman



Elmhurst-Chicago Stone Company's first steam shovel, c. 1915.
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of Lombard entered a partnership and took out a lease on Graue's promising but small quarry to begin a larger operation. The quarry was located about a mile west of the village center (just outside the corporate boundary), and a railroad spur was built to connect the quarry to the main railroads. After two years of good business, the partners purchased 11 acres of land from Louis Graue for the sum of \$3,300.

In the early years of the quarry, the company produced clay brick and tile as well as cut stone. However, the clay soon ran out, and limestone blocks became the primary focus of the company. In 1893, Adolph Hammerschmidt bought Henry Assman's share of the partnership and became the sole owner of the enterprise, which he named the **Elmhurst-Chicago Stone Company**. It was then that Adolph's second son, F.W.M. Hammerschmidt, known as Max, joined his father from Naperville to help manage the quarry. Following its 1910 incorporation as a city, Max eventually became the second mayor of Elmhurst in 1912. After Adolph stepped down from the role of President in 1901, his eldest son William took the reins of the



*Quarry workers handle explosives, June 1910.
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company, which has remained in the same family since its founding to the present day.

Throughout the early 20th century the company was on the cutting edge of mining technology. In 1915 the quarry became one of the first in the Midwest to utilize a steam shovel to move stone. In the 1920s, switching from steam engines to diesel engines increased productivity. As the years progressed, rail transportation gave way to trucks, and the quarry was dug ever deeper. Limestone from the

quarry laid the foundations for countless buildings in the Chicago area. Crushed stone from the quarry was made into ready mix concrete that was used to build the new expressways circling Elmhurst. As demand increased, the company acquired several other quarry sites across DuPage County. Today, the Elmhurst-Chicago Stone Company is the oldest business in Elmhurst, and one of the oldest in the state of Illinois.

As the City of Elmhurst grew more populous, the dust and noise from the blasting of stone drew the ire of residents that lived around the rim of the quarry. This contentious relationship between residents and the company came to an end in 1992 when DuPage County purchased the quarry for use as a storm water management facility. This was in response to the devastating flooding along Salt Creek in 1987, which caused millions of dollars in damages. After several years of preparation, the facility opened in 1996. The Elmhurst-Chicago Stone Company's headquarters and concrete production facility remain adjacent to the quarry at 400 W. First Street.

By Daniel Lund, EHM Staff, 2017