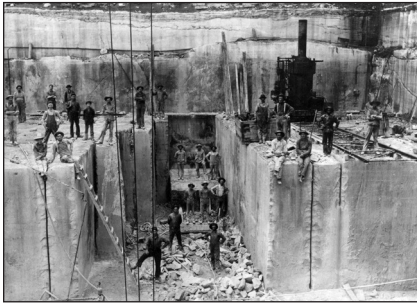


Salem Limestone: Quarrying



The Salem Limestone was first quarried for building stone in south-central Indiana in 1827. Renowned for its uniformity and thickness and quarried along a 30-mile belt in Lawrence, Monroe,

and Owen Counties, Salem Limestone came into prominence as a dimensional stone in the late 1800s. Although the basic principles of quarrying have changed little since then, tools and equipment have improved and fewer people are now needed to quarry the same amount of stone.

Unwanted overburden material—soil and rock—must first be removed above the stone to be quarried. Next, diamond-studded belt saws are used to make vertical separations that free a huge “cut,” about 4 feet by 10 feet or more and weighing more than 100 tons, from the working ledge. The cut is then split loose at the base by driving wedges into shallow horizontal drill holes. The cut is turned down on its side using inflatable bags and spilt again by wedges into mill blocks. Blocks of about 10 tons are carried out of the quarry by front-end loaders, where they are transported to mills by rail or truck. As more stone is cut back, overburden is placed in the former work area and rainwater fills the abandoned quarry.

