

*The Paths of the Trade: Italian Stonemasons in the United States*¹

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This article examines the history of Italian stonecutters from Valle Cervo, an alpine village in Piedmont, Italy. These migrants comprised a wave of temporary emigration to the United States between 1870 and 1915. The migration paths followed by these artisans demonstrates the close connection among their various migrations, settlements and opportunities for employment in the eastern United States. The reconstruction of the histories of individual emigrants, utilizing Italian and American sources, census records, trade-union press and private documents, provides some insight into the experiences of these stonecutters and their social networks.

Originating in a valley south of the Monte Rosa massif,² the emigrants of Valle Cervo have maintained a tradition of emigration based upon their work in stone masonry and cutting. Since the end of the sixteenth century, every spring, the men of this valley have left seeking contractual employment in their work. The economic balance of the community as a whole was based on the exportation of male work while the development of the land and livestock was worked by the women; land however is scarce in the region and what is available is of poor quality. Consequently, emigration comprised the principal support of the community.³ Incapable of providing for the whole population, farming was nonetheless essential for the survival of those who remained when the men left.

¹ This article is part of a study conducted with a grant from the Fondazione Sella. Research project "BIELLESI NEL MONDO".

² On the traditional seasonal emigration from most of the valleys of the Alps among others See, P. Corti, A. Lonni, *L'emigrazione temporanea in una vallata alpina dell'Ottocento*, in E. Franzina (editor); *Un altro Veneto. Saggi e studi di storia dell'emigrazione (sec. XIX-XX)*, Padova Francisci, 1984; A. Lazzarini, *L'emigrazione temporanea dalla montagna veneta nel secondo Ottocento*, "Ricerche di studi di storia sociale e religiosa", 10, 1976; L. Campatelli, *Insedimenti e forme di economia nella valle Riparia*, "Rivista geografica Italiana", n.45, fasc. 2, Jun. 1958 and fasc. 3, Sept. 1958; L. Candida, *Il fenomeno migratorio nella Val Varaita*, "Rivista geografica Italiana", a.LIX, fasc. III, 1952; R. Blanchard, *Les Alpes occidentales*, Tome Sexieme, *Le versant piemontais*, 1, Grenoble, P. Arthaud, 1954; U. Baldioli, Chiorando, *L'emigrazione in alcuni paesi della provincia di Cuneo*, "La riforma sociale", a. X, vol. XIII, 1903.

³ On the tradition of seasonal emigration connected to the trade of masonry and stone cutting in Valle Cervo See, S. Olmo, *Emigrazione e comunità in Valle Cervo nella prima metà del Settecento*

Alone in Valle Cervo for eight months each year, the women developed an autonomous and complex economy. They cultivated small plots of oats, fed the animals with wild grass gathered in the Alps, surrounding the valley, picked the chestnuts to be added to the milk, forming the traditional meal, made and sold cheese and butter and administered the family income. Mothers and daughters, old and young, had distinct duties in the economy of the household, whose composition was continuously adjusted to provide a structure functional to the temporary absence of the males. The men emigrated in small groups of siblings, formed on the basis of trade as well as kinship. Sharing the same skills, they worked together and, when divided, maintained contacts for future contracts. The family links provided information on the labor market, and a network of social relations controlled the possible places and opportunities for work. The men working in Europe returned home at the end of fall, departing again at the beginning of March. Those going overseas were forced to longer absences. Men, contracted for large jobs such as dams and tunnels in the U.S. and Africa, might not return for several years; with few exceptions, however, they did return.

Migration overseas began in the nineteenth century. The building of the large infrastructures required by the second industrial revolution raised the demand for the skilled labor offered by the men of Valle Cervo. The men of the valley could offer the right skills for enterprises such as the Panama and Suez Canals, the Assuan Dam and the tunnels of the Alps. In 1860 a technical school opened in Campiglia, the largest of the five villages of the valley, soon followed by two additional schools.⁴ These schools provided instruction in building techniques and prepared pupils for future contracts. The teachers were expert masons who transmitted their knowledge and shared their

"Bollettino Storico Bibliografico Subalpino", LXXV, fasc. 1, Jan.-Jun., 1977; M. Sella, *La bursch*, Biella, 1964; R. Valz Blin, *Le prime società di capimastri della Valle d'Andorno*, "Biella", a.V, n.1, Jan. 1967, ID., *Famosi impresari del secolo XIX*, Ibid., a.V, n.2, Feb. 1967; ID., *Un famoso costruttore biellese*, Ibid., a.V, n.5, May 1967; ID., *Le comunità di Biella e Andorno*, Biella, 1966; ID., *Memorie sull'alta valle del Cervo*, Biella, 1959. See, also *Atti della giunta per l'inchiesta Agraria e sulle condizioni delle classi agricole*, vol. VIII, Tomo I, fasc. 1, *Relazione del Commissario Avv. F. Meardi*, Roma, 883; G. Casalis, *Dizionario Storico-Geografico-Statistico-Commerciale degli Stati di S.M. il Re di Sardegna*, vol. III, Torino, 1836, Campiglia, vol. XIV, Torino, 1846, Piedicavallo, vol. XVI, Torino, 1847, Quittengo, vol. XVIII, Torino, 1849, San Paolo. Archivio di Stato di Torino. Corte. Biella. Mazzo I di addizione. *Relazione del Commissario Ghilini, Intendente della provincia di Biella sulle comunità cadenti nell'ammissione di causato*, 30 dicembre 1776. Biella, Archivio di Stato. *Relazione dell'Intendente Bianchiotti*, 22 agosto 1753.

⁴ The first school was opened in Campiglia by 1861, the second in Rosazza by 1869 and the third in Piedicavallo by 1872. Classes were held from November to March, according with the necessity of the craft, since pupils were supposed to follow their fathers for the seasonal emigration from Spring to Fall. Main subjects taught in the schools were mathematics, design, geometry, architectural design and topography, sometimes evening classes of French and English were instituted to meet the needs of future emigrants. See G.M. Pugno, *Storia dell'insegnamento tecnico in Piemonte ai primordi del sec. XX*, n.d.; S. Pozzo, *Della istruzione popolare nel biellese*, Biella, 1869; C. Rosazza, *Le scuole professionali di Rosazza*, "La Rivista biellese", A.III, n.5, Sept.-Oct. 1949.

experience. In March, schools closed and the pupils followed the teachers for practical training. Schools were promoted and financed by the wealthiest and most fortunate contractors, who foresaw the development of the trade and the prospects offered to the traditional craft of the valley. Since 1876 a weekly newspaper had been published in Valle Cervo, providing information on the labor market in Italy and abroad. Every project of the Italian railways, and each of the applicable enterprises planned in America, Asia or Africa were reported and described in technical detail. Contracts abroad were preferred, since earnings were higher and a lucky campaign for a few years could allow the fortunate worker to retire on wisely invested savings. Thus, it was the strong craft identity that determined the paths of the emigrants of Valle Cervo through the towns and quarries of the United States, while access to the labor market was opened by an information system provided by group links.

It is customary to interpret emigration as a transfer of individuals from place to place leading to the development of new settlements in the country of arrival. In this instance, however, we are examining a pattern of emigration in motion. Because the Valle Cervo emigrants rarely settled, their migrant itineraries were often incompletely reported in U.S. records. This source needs to be complemented and cross-referenced with records on file at the community of origin in Italy.

The characteristics of the stonecutting trade and the structure of the original community are paramount to the understanding of the rationale behind the group formations of these emigrants and their migratory experiences in the United States. That is, immigrating for work to various destinations, they chose between different labor opportunities and congregated according to the social links extant. The needs of the community of departure influenced the offer of labor, the time spent abroad, and the amount of work, *i.e.*, savings, needed before returning.

INDIVIDUAL EXPERIENCES

Following are a few of the stories of the men of Valle Cervo, tracing their movements and describing the settlements originated by their emigration. These stories illustrate why Valle Cervo stonecutters were forced to move from place to place, how they obtained information about job opportunities, and the kinds of social networks that connected all their movements.

The first case study is a pair of immigrants by the names of Oddone Rosazza and Camillo Rosazza, who settled in the small town of Avondale, Pennsylvania.⁵ Oddone worked in all of the principal centers of the granite

⁵ Letter of the family Rosazza Riz. Letter of Paul Peraldo to his brother-in-law Pietro Rosazza Riz, Avondale, Pa., Dec. 18, 1912. Onorato Rosazza Riz, son of Pietro, kindly accepted to show the author the whole collection of the letters of his parents. I wish to express my appreciation to him as well as to all the people of the valley who helped me during my work in reconstructing their story.

industry in the eastern part of the United States. On his arrival in the United States in 1882, Oddone worked on a railroad along the Potomac River, at Harper's Ferry. After marrying the daughter of a Genovese family with whom he boarded, Oddone moved throughout the eastern states following employment opportunities. He worked in Port Deposit, Maryland, where a large quarry is still in operation, in Pennsylvania and Vermont and then returned to Avondale, Pennsylvania.⁶ In this village of 640 inhabitants there was a handful of stonecutters employed in two quarries between Avondale and West Grove, operated by the Pennsylvania Marble and Granite Company. By 1900 Oddone had settled here with his wife and two children Amanda and Raymond.⁷ Ten years later he was still in Avondale but the work had become unrewarding: throughout 1909 he had been employed fewer than 24 weeks.⁸ Employment opportunities continued to decrease in the following years and many stonecutters were forced out of work by an explosion that flooded the quarry. This misfortune marked the beginning of the family's venture into farming. Within one year, farming had become a business involving the whole family.⁹

In the years between 1892 and 1902 Pietro Rosazza Riz wrote to his wife Rosa from Falls Mills, West Va., Granite Hill and Falls Mills, and ultimately from Avondale, Pa., where he met his friends Oddone and Camillo. Pietro was again in West Virginia in the spring of 1900, and returned to Avondale one year later. The next spring, Pietro returned with Paul Peraldo to Port Deposit, but shortly after, moved to Green Shoal West Va., then to Huntington and finally settled in Logan with Clemente.

In the same years Paul Peraldo, brother of Rosa, was in Baltimore, then in Port Deposit where the census officer registered him as boarding with five other stonecutters from Rosazza. The actual number of companions from Rosazza may have been higher, as several other residents of the boarding

The name of the Rosazza family will come up again several times with a few others in this article, naming people not necessarily related. Several Rosazza, Peraldo and Valz eventually mentioned have in common only their origin from the same villages of the upper Valle Cervo, or Valle d'Andorno, whose population shares a limited number of surnames. Since the names are too few, because of the habit of naming children after the grandparents, no wonder the impressive flourishing of nicknames.

⁶ Letter written by Maragaret Rosazza Connel to the author. Avondale, Pa., 10/11/84.

⁷ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Twelfth Census of the Population, 1900, Population Schedules, Manuscript (hereafter U.S. 12 Census, 1900), Pennsylvania, Chester County, National Archives, Reel 1393, E.D.84, sheet 4, Avondale, Clatham St. n. 201, Rosazza Camillo, and sheet 5, Avondale, New St. n. 400, Rosazza Oddone.

⁸ U.S. Department of Commerce and Labor, Bureau of the Census, Thirteenth Census of the Population, 1910, Population Schedules, Manuscript (hereafter U.S. 13 Census, 1910), Pennsylvania, Chester County, National Archives, Reel 1227, E.D.2, sheet 2b, New St. n. 400. Rosazza Oddone.

⁹ Letters of Rosazza Riz, Letters of Oddone Rosazza to his friend Pietro Rosazza, Avondale, Pa., 26 Dec. 1913.

house were listed only by the first name, followed by the note "unknown".¹⁰ In 1901 Paul Peraldo was in Avondale,¹¹ in 1908 he worked in Washington, D.C., carving the columns of the National Museum and he returned to Avondale in 1912.

Another Stonecutter from Rosazza, Felice Rosazza, was, in 1900, in Mercer County, West Va., with a team of about twenty men from Valle Cervo.¹² The following year he was in Avondale and in Port Deposit.¹³ In 1903 he was in Guildford Mass. In 1910 he was again in West Va., in the Raleigh County, accompanied by his wife and children.¹⁴ Two years later he sent the family back to Europe and moved to Bolivia, where his brothers were located.

The stonecutters of Valle Cervo followed a mandatory path: the quarries and the sheds of Vermont, New Hampshire and Maine, those in Pennsylvania, and the buildings of large cities such as Boston, Baltimore and Washington, D.C., in the east of the U.S. The first of the stonecutters from the valley arrived in the States around 1870. There are few records of their arrival. A novel entitled *Da Biella a San Francisco, ossia storia di tre valligiani andornini in America*¹⁵ describes the long journey through America of three stonemasons. Even more details, however, are given in two letters written by Angelo Rosazza to his mother. In January 1872, he arrived in Detroit.¹⁶ In the winter Angelo Rosazza worked as a lumberman.

Between 1880 and 1900 the opening of new quarries, the increased opportunities for skilled work in the main centers of the granite industry and the construction of stone buildings in place of wooden houses in urban areas, set the stage for a large demand for stonecutters. Kinship networks provided information and assisted in recruitment and an increasing number of cutters, masons and contractors left Valle Cervo with the prospect of working a few years in America. Although in Italy the pattern of emigration was seasonal, overseas the emigrants remained away for several years: two or three at least and sometimes five for each journey.

¹⁰ U.S. 12 Census, 1900, Maryland, Cecil County, National Archives, Reel 620, E.D.26, sheet 14, Port Deposit, Granite Avenue n. 39.

¹¹ *The Granite Cutters' Journal*, Aug. 1901, n. 293, *Members admitted by card*, Paul Peraldo, Avondale, from Port Deposit.

¹² U.S. 12 Census, 1900, West Virginia, Mercer County, National Archives, Reel 1766, E.D.77, sheet 18, Beaver Pond.

¹³ *The Granite Cutters' Journal*, Apr. 1901, n. 289, *Ibid.*, Aug. 1902, n.305.

¹⁴ U.S. 13 Census, 1910, West Virginia, Raleigh County, National Archives, Reel 1696, E.D. 176, sheet 14A, Slab Fork, Felix Rosazza, *See also, Roots of Lmal dcampnil*, autobiography of Lee Rosazza Norse, son of Felix, unpublished manuscript, owned by Gino Rosazza Gianin.

¹⁵ L. Feraud, *Da Biella a San Francisco, Ossia storia di tre valligiani andornini in America*, Torino, 1882.

¹⁶ Letter written by Angelo Rosazza to his mother, Detroit, Jan. 29, 1872 and St. Louis, Nov. 2, 1872, kindly showed to the author by Gianni Valz Blin, to whom I am deeply grateful.

In addition to the information given by the social network, the men referred to the trade press. *The Granite Cutters Journal*, first published in Boston in 1877 by the Granite Cutters Association of America, provided information on business in the quarries and in the construction industry. A full page of the monthly magazine was written in Italian and often contained names of stonecutters from Valle Cervo. In 1901 the *Journal* reported the death of Amabile Zorio, in a casualty in Hurricane, Maine. Zorio originated from Piedicavallo, a village located at the top of the valley, and his brother, a worker in Barre, Vt., was advised through this press to deliver the last wage of Amabile to his widow in Italy.¹⁷

In 1895 a survey of the men working in the quarries and the sheds of Barre, Vt., describes the stonecutters as an especially mobile class. "They must go where contracts go. If these are short, moves are frequent and perhaps from Maine to Georgia and then back again. Their high wages are sometimes entirely consumed in it".¹⁸

Because of their wandering lifestyle, the emigrants did not settle. Most of them were adults who left in small groups of friends and relatives and formed gangs. The number of men recruited in a gang varied but the ideal was twelve, as it provided enough daily work to the blacksmith among them who sharpened the tools. Although often only seven or eight men associated in a gang, there was still the need for a blacksmith for edging and cornering of their hammers and chisels. Single working stonecutters had less chance of employment and the gangs obtained the best contracts. A gang could also be assembled just for the period of one contract, as that constituted in 1900 in Beaver Pond, Mercer County, West Virginia. The group was of twenty men, all with surnames suggesting an origin from Piedicavallo. They boarded in the house of a compatriot but within a few months had left for other work.¹⁹ Women were few and took care of boarders in the family, as was customary among Italian women in North America.²⁰ Because of the erratic work schedule, men usually chose to leave their wives home, conforming to the tradition of female self-sufficiency in Valle Cervo. At home, women helped each other, and the network of relatives and neighbors provided support in the absence

¹⁷ "The Granite Cutters' Journal", Aug. 1901, n.293. On the Italian component in the craft unions see, E. Fenton, *Italian immigrants in the Stone Workers Union*, "Labor History", vol. 3, n.2, Spring, 1962, p. 187.

¹⁸ G.E. Hooker, *Labor and Life at the Barre Granite Quarries. A Brief Survey of the Social Conditions on Millstone Hill, Barre, Vermont, in the Autumn 1895*, Barre, Vt., 1985, p. 10.

¹⁹ U.S. 12 Census, 1900, West Virginia, Mercer County, National Archives, Reel 1766, E.D. 77, sheet 18, Beaver Pond, cit., United States censuses do not list the place of birth of persons, but only the nation. Due to this reason most of the people named in this study have been checked in the records of the Register Offices or the parishes of the villages of Valle Cervo.

²⁰ For the Italian women's work in the boarding houses see, R.F. Harney, *Dalle frontiere alle Little Italies. Gli italiani in Canada, 1800-1945*, Bonacci, Roma; 1984, B.B. Caroli, R.F. Harney, L.F. Tomasi (editors), *The Italian Immigrant Women in North America*, Toronto, 1978; M. Hall Ets. *Rosa: the Life of an Italian Immigrant*, Minneapolis, 1970.

of the man. Difficulties were overcome with the assistance of this tight social organization.²¹ Wives leaving the valley to reach their husbands in the States found themselves isolated. The men did not settle in big cities, but usually lived in small villages close to the quarries, and they were often the only Italians in the area. Food shopping could require a long journey by horse. Thus, most of the men preferred to leave the family in the far but safe Valle Cervo, — only a few dared moving wife and children — and instead took friends and relations as boarders.²² Many households were comprised only of men who usually were related.

SETTLEMENTS

Although this pattern of emigration did not lead to settlements, as a rule, within its movements there is evidence of three small and temporary enclaves. One in Fitzwilliam, a colonial town in New Hampshire, the second in Barre, Vermont, designated by the eighties as the capital of the granite industry in the USA, and the third may be found in the scattered, small towns of West Virginia.

Fitzwilliam, New Hampshire

The first notice of people from Valle Cervo in Fitzwilliam dates to around 1890. Shortly after this the emigrants established a small community. By 1893 fifteen men from the same village of the valley, all stonecutters, were enrolled in the annual taxpayers' list. Since none owned property, they were placed in the lowest income brackets.

Fitzwilliam was a small rural center, with a population of about one thousand in 1890, when the first emigrants from Valle Cervo may be found there. They belonged to the status of laborers in the quarries and sheds close to the town.²³ The quarries had started activity in the forties, and the high quality of the granite had rapidly made Fitzwilliam one of the top granite producers, in competition with Concord and Milford. In addition to the long-standing beauty of the stone, after 1848 the Cheshire railroad added expedience to its qualities and, connected Fitzwilliam to the major cities of

²¹ For life and work of the women of the valley See, M. Rosazza, *Il ritorno dei padri*, "La rivista biellese", a. VIII, n.5, May 1928; ID., *La signora scompare*, "La rivista biellese", a. VIII, n.2, Feb. 1928; *Atti della giunta per l'inchiesta Agraria e sulle condizioni delle classi agricole*, vol. VIII, Tomo I, fasc. 1, cit.; Istituto Nazionale di Economia Agraria (INEA), *Lo spopolamento montano in Italia*, I, *Le Alpi Liguri e Piemontesi*, Milano, Roma, 1932, p. 157, *La Valsesia*; R. Valz Blin, *Memorie*, cit.

²² The role of the boarding houses have been judged as crucial in the setting of the chain migration. See, J. and L. Mac Donald, *Chain Migration, Ethnic Neighborhood and Social Networks*, "Milbank Memorial Fund Quarterly", XIII, 42, 1964; J. Briggs, *An Italian Passage. Immigrants to Three American Cities 1890-1930*, London: Yale University Press, 1978.

²³ U.S. 12 Census, 1900, *Reports*, vol. 1, *Population*, Part 1, Table 5, Population of states and territories by minor civil dimensions 1890 and 1900, p. 265, New Hampshire, Washington, 1903.

Massachusetts and New York State, contributing to the rapid growth of the local industry.²⁴

The industry grew fast and by 1886 the shipping of the stone amounted to over seven thousand tons. Between 1900 and 1910, the busiest years of the granite industry, more than three hundred men were employed there. At top production the sheds of Fitzwilliam employed four hundred whose best known product was memorial monuments.²⁵

The other Italians of the area came also from the Alps. Many departed from the valleys surrounding lake Maggiore and lake Como. In 1913 five out of eight sheds operating in Milford, N.H., were owned by persons from Como and the region of Venice.²⁶

By 1910 the families of the Italian stonecutters clustered in Fitzwilliam Depot, the neighborhood closest to the quarries; the settlement where most of the emigrants lived. The foreign community numbered about 350. Among the 43 households on Richmond street comprised of 147 persons, 10 families including 34 individuals originated from Montesinaro.

By 1900 four out of eight households in Fitzwilliam were families and four were groups of men. All the families were closely related and kinship was tightened by segregation from the natives. David Rosazza and Edward Yon, for instance, were brothers-in-law. The two became the owners of a quarry and a shed, and acquired a prominent position in the small Italian community. David Rosazza, after the death of his wife Clementina, in 1891 married her sister Spiritina, who arrived for the wedding directly from Italy. Their first daughter, Rina, married Edmondo Valz in 1905, who came from Montesinaro four years earlier. Delight Valz reached his father Fedele in 1890, and married Antonietta Prario, daughter of another stonecutter who was born in Montesinaro and had settled in Fitzwilliam.

Business improved remarkably the status of a few. In 1893 David Rosazza was a stonecutter²⁷ but by 1894 he was running a shed, the "Rosazza D.B. & Monroe L.C. & C.", with an estimated value of \$1,050²⁸. In spite of the relatively low value of the business, he was no longer a day laborer, but an entrepreneur. In 1895 David became the sole owner and three years later purchased a house worth \$1,800. In 1902 David became a partner with Peter Norza and the name of the shed changed to "Rosazza and Norza"²⁹. In 1908

²⁴ Richard G. West, *The Story of Fitzwilliam* N.H. 1976, p. 33.

²⁵ J.F. Norton, *History of Fitzwilliam N.H. from 1752 to 1887 With a Genealogical Record of Many Fitzwilliam Families* by Joel Wittemore, New York, 1888, Fitzwilliam bicentennial 1762-1962, Issued by the Bicentennial Committee, s.d.

²⁶ A.W. Brayley, *History of the Granite Industry of New England*, vol. I, Boston, 1913, Ch. VIII, p. 152.

²⁷ Fitzwilliam, Town Hall, Records of births 1879-1893, — Rosazza, Jan. 29, 1893, by David and Spiritina Rosazza, and *ibid.* Records of deaths, 1879-1893, Clementina Rosazza, Jul. 7, 1894.

²⁸ Fitzwilliam, Town Hall, Annual report of the town officers of Fitzwilliam, N.H., 1894.

²⁹ *The Granite Cutters' Journal* Oct. 1902, n.307.

Delight Valz, in Fitzwilliam since 1902, obtained the property of a quarry and a shed with Leonildo Magnani,³⁰ and Edward Yon processed in his shed the granite of his own two quarries.

The main product of the Fitzwilliam sheds was cemetery monuments. The "Magnani & Valz" specialized in memorial stones, processing the granite of its own quarry. Wholesale dealers were the best customers. In the year between October 1908 and 1909 the shed cut and shipped 79 monuments, mostly to a firm in Chicago, Ill. and to Mansfield, Ohio. Part of the production was also shipped to New York and Barre, Vt.³¹ Leonildo Magnani and Delight Valz did most of the cutting themselves, but for big orders they hired three or four other Italian stonecutters, favoring those from Valle Cervo. An average of three workers were employed each month by the firm. With large rush orders, every stonecutter of the Italian group was summoned to help. For example, in March 1910 David Rosazza, who was an independent owner of a shed, did some cutting for the "Magnani & Valz" company at a salary of about \$50, joined later by his son Hercules. As a rule the orders were for inexpensive monuments and more than half of the whole business was made up of bare memorial stones, worth less than \$40. Between the fall of 1908 and 1909 no more than ten orders exceed \$50, and only one, placed by a firm in New York, was worth more than \$100. In 1910 the average monthly profit was \$40 per partner, calculated on a daily wage of \$2.50-3.00, which was the wage signed by the Unions. In the first decade of the century the contract terms were on the basis of \$2.80 per day, and 35 cents per hour, the minimum approved wage for a day of eight hours³². The "Magnani & Valz" employed only unionized labor, like many firms operating in Fitzwilliam, and paid a salary of \$10 after 4 days of work to Hercules Rosazza, while Peter Martinier received \$15 for 5 days.

Business was also irregular. At peak season up to three hundred stonecutters could get a job in the quarries and sheds of the area, but in unfavorable times there could be fewer than thirty. In winter, the major firms were compelled to discharge most of the laborers. The granite industry started to wane just before World War I, but during the war the trade of the stone, connected to the manufacture of cemetery monuments, grew bigger than ever nourished by war casualties. By 1920, the changing architectural designs pulled the stone out of fashion and many firms were forced to close. The quarries and sheds, once busy, were abandoned, and Fitzwilliam Depot, the borough closest to the granite area, returned to the wilderness. One of the first to leave was David Rosazza. After reaching the peak of success, at the end of

³⁰ Fitzwilliam, Town Hall, Annual report of the officers of Fitzwilliam, N.H., 1914, p.19. Documents of the firm examined in this study belong to the years 1908-1909 and 1910.

³¹ Registers 1908-1910 of the firm of "Magnani & Valz", kindly shown to the author by Pia Magnani Lawrence, during the interview held in Troy, N.H., Sept. 16, 1984.

³² R.G. West, *The Story of Fitzwilliam*, cit.

1911 he went out of business; sold the quarry, the shed and the house and enjoyed his retirement going back to the mountains of Valle Cervo. He died in 1938,³³ survived by his son Edison, and daughter Rina, married to Edmondo Valz, both returned to Italy in 1915.³⁴

Barre, Vermont

A few craftsmen from the valley joined the community of immigrants of Barre, Vt., whose granite industry became so busy a few decades later that by the eve of the new century Barre was the capital of the granite industry in the United States. The first Italians reached Barre in the eighties, "imported" from Carrara, Tuscany, by an English entrepreneur. There were fewer than twenty but this core formed the bulk of the community of skilled artisans of the city.³⁵ Between 1880 and 1890 the granite industry experienced impressive growth: by 1894 seventy quarries were operated with no fewer than one thousand men.³⁶ Concomitantly, the population of Barre gained more than 4,000 inhabitants, over the 2,000 by 1870. By 1910 the population was 12,000, 4,500 of whom were employed in the granite industry.³⁷ At this time the granite processed in the sheds of Barre was 25-30 percent of all national production and most of the stonecutters were Scottish in origin.

Italian immigrants who arrived after 1900 comprised about one half of the population of the town by 1910. They were mainly of northern Italian extraction. Since the largest number originated from the region surrounding Lake Maggiore, they shared the name of "Lombardi" and the dialect most widely spoken was the one used in Lombardy. In 1913 the Italian community was described as "not of the class that comes from Italy by the thousands to make roadbeds and dig the ditches of America, but from the northern part of the country, skilled workmen, who have transferred their field of labor from the fine marble of Italy to the harder granite of Vermont".³⁸

³³ Comune di Piedicavallo, Archivio comunale, ISTAT, VII Censimento della popolazione del Regno, 1931, Fogli di famiglia, n.257, Rosazza Battore Davide.

³⁴ U.S.13 Census, 1910, New Hampshire, Cheshire County, National Archives, Reel 860, Fitzwilliam, Depot village, E.D.172, sheet 10A, and P. Dente, *Unamericana a Montesinaro*, "Leco di Biella", Apr. 8, 1979, for the death of Rina Rosazza, daughter of David.

³⁵ See, Mary Tomasi, *The Italian History in Vermont*, in "Vermont History", vol. XXVIII, n.1, Jan. 1960, p.73.

³⁶ *Historical Souvenir of Barre, 1894*, p.90, and *Barre In Retrospect, 1776-1976*, Barre, 1975, p.61.

³⁷ Paul Demers, *Labor and Social Relations of the Granite Industry in Barre*, Unpublished Thesis, May 1974, and A.W. Brayley, *History of the Granite Industry of New England*, cit., vol. II, p.35.

³⁸ A.W. Brayley, *History of the Granite Industry of New England*, vol.II.,cit., p.36. On the Italian population in Barre, See also, P. Pugliese, *Vermont Italians. Unique and Proud*, "The Sunday Rutland Herald and the Sunday Times Argus", May 9, 1976; C.P. Calcagni, *A Sociological Study of the Religious Change Involving the Northern Italians in Barre, Vt.* Unpublished Thesis, Department of Sociology, Bates College, 1954; R. Burattini, *Italians and Italo-Americans in Vermont*, Barre, undated (probably 1937), Unpublished Paper.

The esteem for the artisan skills and the acknowledgment of a lifestyle not dissimilar from their own, did not modify the attitude of the Yankee middle class toward the immigrants. The geographical separation and social discrimination was as effective in Barre as in every other American town. The residential segregation was strict: immigrants were confined to the north end neighborhoods, called also the "rough end". This part of the town was closer to the place of employment, *i.e.*, the quarries and the sheds. Houses in the north were cheaper, but the neighborhood was neglected by the municipality, the roads were unpaved and a sewage system nonexistent. The social segregation of the immigrants was even more stringent: they were not allowed to the majority of clubs and organizations created by the native born middle class, and were excluded from every-day social life. This attitude forced the immigrant community to forge his own organizational network and social life.

The families of Valle Cervo also lived in the north end, within a few blocks along two roads, in an area called "*il pra*" where small grocery shops sold Italian food.³⁹ The shops, and household bars, were often run by the wives and widows of stonecutters. These bars survived the prohibition era, as they were overlooked by enforcement officials. These establishments were considered a "social security" payment for women who had lost the main economic support of their families. Widows, in fact, were numerous. Virtually all were victims, as were their dead husbands, of the dust of Vermont granite.

Joseph Valz, born in Montesinaro, at the top of Valle Cervo, opened a shed in Barre in 1908, the "Valz & Co. Granite Dealers", in partnership with Costante and Victor Valz, also of Montesinaro. Costante Valz was, like Joseph, a former worker in Fitzwilliam, where he had become an American citizen in 1900.⁴⁰ In Barre, he boarded with Joseph's family, since Joseph had been joined by his wife and their three-year-old son in 1905. The family hosted two other lodgers, Guido Valz and John Valz, joined in 1910 by Victor Valz.⁴¹ By 1911 many more joined the group to work in a variety of quarries operating outside Barre, (Montpellier and Bethel). The same year, two men returned to Italy, while Joseph Valz moved family and firm to a new address, in the same neighborhood. By 1912 another stonecutter of Montesinaro opened a shed, the "Prario Granite Company", which survived until 1918. By 1917 a new partner joined the "Valz Granite Company", a firm apparently thriving.⁴²

³⁹ D.G. Valz, *Barre's Italian Pioneers: How They Lived*, *Ibid.* July 27, 1983. About the Italian habit to cluster together see, S. Baily, *Chain Migration of Italian to Argentina: Case Studies of the Agnonesi and the Sirolesi*, "Studi Emigrazione", Vol. XIX, n.65, March 1982, p. 73; J. Briggs, *Birds of Passage. Italian Immigrants to Three American Towns 1880-1945*, cit. D. Cinel, *From Italy to San Francisco. The Immigration Experience*. Stanford, Stanford University Press, 1982.

⁴⁰ Cheshire County Supreme Court, Keene, N.H., Naturalization Records, vol.3, 1892-1904, October 11 and 26, 1904.

⁴¹ U.S.13 Census, 1910, Vermont, Washington County, National Archives, Reel 1617, Barre city, E.D.210, sheet 92, Seminary St.

⁴² Barre City Directory, 1918.

In stonecutting skill is more important than capital and most of the sheds were run by cutters and carvers who have in their skill the basis of a business. According to the best known Barre's historian, "The hammers and chisels and drills that a stonecutter carried in his box constituted the principal means of production. Wherever a stonecutter set his tools that was his workshop. Consequently even the most recent immigrant was capable of establishing himself as an independent producer or within a partnership."⁴³

Craft was more important than money, and about 75 percent of all sheds were operated by the owner who worked together with the laborers. Only a few firms employing hundreds of men, had sophisticated machinery, and practiced division of labor. Most of the sheds employed between 20 and 75 laborers, maintaining the features of a workshop. Even labor conflicts and trade-unionism mirrored the craft character of both laborers and entrepreneurs. Probably the relationship between the two categories has been best depicted by Dino Valz, recalling the experience of his father Joseph as owner of a shed:

Since many of the workers were single men, they usually 'boarded' with relatives or people from the same Italian town. As a result, some workers ate at the same table and slept in the same house as the owners. This class intimacy precluded sharp clashes of opinion. A worker can't very well quarrel with the owner brother or uncle who feeds him.⁴⁴

This opinion is strengthened by the fact that in the case of labor conflicts, as in the spring of 1908, the Italian sheds were always the first to reach an agreement and start working again. Nevertheless, labor conflicts remained. Workers were widely organized in trade unions, and class consciousness was high. Although the chance of owning a shed was open for every stonecutter, ownership did not provide real social mobility.⁴⁵ The native ruling class maintained the financial control of the town, and monopolized business and professions.⁴⁶ Similarly, private production did not change the life of the immigrants of Valle Cervo: becoming a private producer was as easy as returning to the former status of wage laborer. The granite industry reached its peak in 1910, but gradually slowed in the following years, as other materials became more suitable to the new architectural fashions. After 1915

⁴³ Paul Demers, *cit.*, p. 4, A. W. Brayley, *cit.*

⁴⁴ D. G. Valz, *The Diversity of Old Barre*, "The Times Argus", November 16, 1981. For a more detailed analysis of labor conflicts in Barre see, P. Demers, *cit.* E. Fenton, *Immigrant and Unions: A Case Study: Italians and American Labor, 1870-1920*, New York, Arno Press, 1975, p. 434; B. Sanders, *Vermont Labor Agrigator*, "Labor History", vol. 15, n. 2, Spring 1974; J. Lott, *The Quarry Workers International Union, Barre Vermont 1922-1933*, Middlebury College, 1971; O. T. Johnson, *The Labor Situation in the Granite Industry in the Barre District, Vermont*, Unpublished Thesis, 1928.

⁴⁵ Miriam McDonald, *The Granite Years: Barre Vermont 1880-1900: A Socio-Economic Study Using Quantitative Methods*, University of Vermont, Published Thesis, May 1978.

⁴⁶ Miriam McDonald, *The Granite Years: Barre Vermont 1880 to 1900: a Socio-Economic Study Using Quantitative Methods*, University of Vermont, Unpublished Thesis, May 1978.

many small sheds closed, while larger sheds introduced technological advances which diminished the need for skilled labor. By the end of World War I Salvatore Prario, who had opened his own shed in 1912, was out of business and returned to a wage worker. His friend Joseph Valz, still a partner of the "Valz Granite Co." also quit his craft: instead of cutting, he transported Italian wines in partnership with a wholesale dealer in New York. The lung disease, typical of the stonecutters after a few years of processing Vermont granite, caused the change of Joseph Valz' occupation — The group of Valle Cervo shrank rapidly: three years later, by 1921, only two were left in town and a third ran a food wholesale in Montpelier. All the stonecutters were gone. Joseph Valz returned to his native village in the Alps where he survived only a short time.

West Virginia

The decline of the granite industry, the knowledge of the danger inherent in the manufacture of the Vermont stone, and the desire for independent business combined to decrease immigration to Vermont and shorten the existence of the small settlements in Barre, while new prospects for work opened in West Virginia. Masons and contractors of Valle Cervo started to move to West Va. after 1900 as the granite industry was declining. Here they could obtain contracts for roads, railroad, and municipal buildings. After World War I the West Va. settlement was the only cluster of people of the valley left in the U.S.; in fact, this settlement had become larger than those of the great centers of the granite industry. The explanation for the boom is likely to be found in the longer contracts obtained in West Virginia by the masons and stonemasons of Valle Cervo. Entering business as contractors they were forced to settle, to take American citizenship and to bring their families. Hence, this community flourished during the twenties and was still alive at the beginning of the fifties, despite the depression of the '30s. A large community of single men and eventually whole families began to settle in the territory of the small state during the first decade of this century; new arrivals continued until the thirties. The development of this settlement poses a more intriguing question than the development of the communities in New Hampshire and Vermont. Indeed, West Virginia has no granite quarries and sheds and none of its towns is recorded in the traditional paths followed by the stonecutters: nor was it named for labor information on the pages of *The Granite Cutters Journal*. Nevertheless, the immigrants from Valle Cervo found, in this southern state, a chance to perform skills in stone and brickwork as contractors. To understand the factors influencing the choice of this settlement, one must evaluate the importance of families and social networks among the people of Valle Cervo. Furthermore, one should not forget the compelling aspiration of the craftsmen to improve their social position.

In West Virginia the men of Valle Cervo settled in the area of the southern coal fields. Part of the foreign laborers in these territories were German and Scottish but the majority were from eastern and southern Europe. Italians, usually from the south, numbered almost 6,000 by 1908 representing about 11 percent of all laborers.⁴⁷ This group had the highest percentage of single adult males, unaccompanied by families, a circumstance that renders them a fluid population.⁴⁸ Hired first as workers along the railroads or as strike-breakers in the mines, the Italians later moved among different coalfields, shifting from mine to mine. In shortage of work, many returned to Europe, waiting for better times.⁴⁹ By 1910 the number of Italians rose to 18 percent of the population of the state. They numbered 21,000 and were the major group of foreign-born, after the Germans, who represented 21 percent.⁵⁰ By 1920, Italians were 23 percent of the population, forming the largest group of foreign-born.⁵¹ The Italian labor camps were isolated, surrounded by mountains which further isolated the communities. Working conditions were poor. "Those who have not been in the West Virginian labor camps can hardly understand how lonely and isolated some of them are" wrote one Italian journalist in 1903, revealing the forced labor, abuse and segregation Italian laborers suffered in a camp in Raleigh County.⁵²

Although it is likely that the stonemasons from Valle Cervo who arrived in West Virginia were spared the experience of the labor camps due to their skills, living conditions were nonetheless hard. The initial arrivals came at the close of the century. The 1900 Census describes a gang of about twenty men in Mercer County, perhaps working on the construction of the bridges along the railroad, or brick and stone constructions inside the mine. Some of the men were already in the States in the eighties and almost all were unmarried and boarding at the same house. Only one of them, Giovanni

⁴⁷ U.S. Senate, 61 Congress, 2d Session. Senate Documents, vol.69, *Immigrants in Industries, Part I, Bituminous Coal Mining*, Washington, 1911, p.145 and p.161, Table 478, *Nationalities Employed in West Virginia Mines*, June 13, 1908.

⁴⁸ This situation mirrors exactly the characters of the Italian emigration at the time, See, E. Sori, *L' Emigrazione Italiana dall'Unità all Seconda Guerra Mondiale*, Bologna, Il Mulino, 1979; G.F. Rosoli, *L' Emigrazione Italiana Negli Stati Uniti: Un Bilancio Storiografico*. In, *L' Emigrazione Italiana nelle Americhe e in Australia*, Milano, F. Angeli. Edited by R. DeFelice, 1979; G. Bock, P. Carpignano, B. Ramirez, *La Formazione dell'Operaio Massa Negli USA 1898-1922*, Milano, Feltrinelli, 1976.

⁴⁹ U.S.Senate, *Immigrants in Industries*, cit., p.155.

⁵⁰ U.S. 13 Census, 1910, *Statistics for West Virginia*, Washington, 1913, p.583, *Statistics of Population*, Table 5, *Foreign Stock*. J. Morton Callahan, *Semicentennial History of West Virginia*, published by the semicentennial commission of West Virginia, 1913. This author estimates the Italian population of the state as about 30 percent of the total.

⁵¹ U.S.Department of Commerce. Fourteenth Census of the U.S., 1920, *State Compendium, West Virginia. Statistics of Population*, p. 23, Table 6, *Country of Birth of the Foreign Born White for the State and Principal Cities 1920*, Washington, 1925.

⁵² G.C.Speranza, *Forced Labor in West Virginia*, "Outlook", vol.74, n.7, June 13, 1903, p.407.

Martiner, brought his wife and infant daughter, Marina. The child lived in West Virginia until the age of six and then returned with her family to Valle Cervo.⁵³

The largest group settled in Fayette County where, in 1900, the Italians numbered 32, and the men of Valle Cervo were probably the sole Italian presence in the area.⁵⁴

Ten years later the group had grown and some of the single men were joined by families. In every household there was a small number of boarders, usually not more than three or four, coming as a rule from the same village as that of the head of the family.⁵⁵ Others settled in Raleigh County after immigrating throughout the states for years. Felice Rosazza travelled for ten years to and from the major quarries of the east, but in 1902 moved with his family to West Virginia. By 1910 Felice worked as a stonemason and lived with his wife and children in Slab Fork, on the same road where other Italians from the surrounding valleys lived with their families.⁵⁶ A few households were scattered in Mercer County,⁵⁷ and in Bramwell, the main town of the county. In Mercer County the immigrants from Italy were 34 by 1900 and 358 ten years later.

Because of the temporary nature of the emigration and the tradition of returning home every three or four years, other stonecutters of the valley, did not appear in the censuses. As mentioned earlier, Pietro Rosazza worked in Logan with his brother Clemente for the greater part of 1903 through 1921 but in 1910 returned home for a short visit, as we learn from the birth of his fourth daughter, Pierina, and from records of his participation in meetings of the local branch of the Italian socialist party held in Rosazza from December 1909 to December 1910.⁵⁸ Apart from this circumstance the census official from Logan County made no effort to record the surnames of the Italians, naming whole Italian families by the name of York.

One striking characteristic of these small communities is the complete geographical separation from the main coal fields where many Italians immigrants settled. Once again it is the trade and skill that pave the way for

⁵³ U.S. 12 Census, 1900, West Virginia, Mercer County, National Archives Reel 1766, E.D. 77, sheet 18, Beaver Pond District, *cit.*, See, also interview of Noemi Parolari Sella to Marina Martiner, March 7, 1983.

⁵⁴ U.S. 12 Census, 1900, West Virginia, Fayette County, National Archives, Reel 1757, E.D. 13, sheet 46, Fayetteville.

⁵⁵ U.S. 13 Census, 1910, West Virginia, Fayette County, National Archives, Reel 1679, E.D. 15, sheet 3 and 4A, and E.D. 10, sheet 30, Fayetteville.

⁵⁶ U.S. 13 Census, 1910, West Virginia, Raleigh County, National Archives, Reel 1695, E.D. 176, sheet 14, Slab Fork.

⁵⁷ U.S. 13 Census, 1910, West Virginia, Mercer County, National Archives, Reel 1689, E.D. 205, sheet 6B, 7A, 7B, Beaver Pond.

⁵⁸ Sezione Socialista della Valle d'Andorno. Libro Degli atti Verballi 1901-1912. Pietro shows up at every meeting from December 1909 to December 1912.

the men of Valle Cervo and gives them an opportunity to work as contractors in the construction of roads and buildings.

In the following years, Fayetteville attracted many families from Piedicavallo. During the twenties about thirty men settled in the town; the solid working opportunities paved the long way to American citizenship,⁵⁹ and many opened their own construction firms. Masons of Valle Cervo had a tradition of construction by contract since the time of Napoleon. Throughout the nineteenth century the best and luckiest stonemasons of the valley succeeded in becoming independent building contractors, not only in France and in Italy, but also in such great works as the dam built in Assuan, Egypt, or the railroads of China. In the States, where the urban building trade had become monopolized by other ethnic groups such as the Irish, the masons of Valle Cervo found more opportunities for work in stonecutting.⁶⁰ Nevertheless, in the rapidly developing society of West Virginia some were awarded contracts for municipal buildings, bridges and roads. The families settled in Fayetteville, still a rural community of about one thousand inhabitants in 1941, formed the largest group.⁶¹ After World War II, Cleante Jamutolo, the most prominent and wealthiest in the community, for years hosted in his garden an annual picnic for all the persons from his native valley.

The group in West Virginia is the only one whose emigration loses, in many cases, its temporary character. The employment opportunities offered here no longer compelled the workers to travel from quarry to quarry seeking employment. The stability of work facilitated the decision to move women and children and settle the family abroad.⁶² However, the group was small and became smaller during the depression of 1929, when many, forced to quit business, retired and returned to Italy. Only a handful of families preferred to stay, and were joined by new arrivals up to the end of the forties. The last generation of emigrants to return arrived between the world-wars, bringing back the unique tradition of celebrating the Fourth of July dinner

⁵⁹ Declarations of Intention held in the Court House of Fayetteville, list 27 persons from the valley between 1908 and 1941.

⁶⁰ Interview of Gino Rosazza Gianin, conducted by Noemi Parolari Sella, Biella, January 28, 1983.

⁶¹ By 1936 the compilations of the Register office in the Town Hall of Piedicavallo, on a total population of 691 residents, registers 58 persons gone to the U.S.; 24 others left the village in the following years, moving to the States, and 23 of them had already American citizenship, since they were born in the States. The Emigration Register held between 1934 and 1947 mirrors the same reality: 46 residents moved to the U.S., the overwhelming majority before 1940, 44 out of 46. About the same number of residents moved in the meantime to France, 47, 45 of them before 1940. On a total of 348 persons who left the village in these years, 117 went abroad, and about one half of them moved to the U.S. Comune di Piedicavallo. Archivio Comunale. Anagrafe cessati, and *Ibid. Registro delle Pratiche di Emigrazione 1934-1947*.

⁶² Twelve Declarations of Intention produced by men of the valley are held by the Court House in Bluefield, Mercer County and five in that one of Welch McDowell County. All of them belong to the years 1910-1930.

which links the secluded villages of the upper valley to the American part of their past.

CONCLUSION

Emigrants from a small territory such as Valle Cervo are only a few — perhaps an insignificant fraction — of the Italian emigration. Nevertheless, the tracing of their routes elucidates some elements of emigration from Italy that deserve attention. First is the importance of skilled trade. The second is the role played by the community of origin in determining the choice and destiny of the settlements. A final characterizing element is the attitudes of the emigrants toward emigration. Emigrants from Valle Cervo never considered emigration as an act of separation from the community but, as an event improving the survival of the original group.

Only this feeling toward the migratory experience explains the behavior of the men of the valley and their resistance to settle abroad. Although their stay in America might be lifelong, this is not considered a sufficient reason to cut links with the villages of the valley. At the end of a life of work, no matter what the degree of integration in the host society, they had to return to their native village. Concomitantly the tradition of seasonal emigration, characterizing the society of Valle Cervo, lessened the emotional consequences of the departure.