


THE PERIODICAL GATHERING OF THE STONE FOUNDATION

STONEMWORK SYMPOSIUM 2024

September 24-28, Barre, Vermont


Host: The Vermont Granite Museum Fiscal Sponsor: The Stone Trust

1924 SEPTEMBER 1924						
Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31



STONE ARTS

2024 SEPTEMBER 2024						
Sun.	Mon.	Tue.	Wed.	Thu.	Fri.	Sat.
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30	31



This SYMPOSIUM followed the usual format, beginning with a social gathering, the ROCKNOCKERS RENDEZVOUS, on Tuesday night. On Wednesday, Thursday and Friday mornings participants were at liberty to watch demonstrations of letter carving, dry stone walling, and the process of finishing stone sculpture—or to go on tours of abandoned quarries, or the active Rock of Ages Granite Quarry, carvings in local cemeteries, or the Trow and Holden Tool Company. Then, after lunch and after dinner each day there were sessions of presentations.

On Saturday, September 28, The ANNUAL BARRE GRANITE FESTIVAL took place at the Vermont Granite Museum featuring demonstrations and exhibitions. Stone Foundation personnel finished work on the Fire Circle and took part in the LITHIC OLYMPICS, stone related games such as Bocce played with stone balls, the Wheelbarrow Steeplechase and Stone Stacking. The evening closed with a communal dinner and auction of carvings and sculpture produced during the demonstrations, and the first fire un the rebuilt fire circle.



Before the SYMPOSIUM commenced there was a LETTER CARVING WORKSHOP—a two day introduction to the craft by long-term Stone Foundation member Karin Sprague. The workshop was brief, but the six novice carvers learned a lot and they acquired skills on which to build. Karen was assisted by Rob Gil (she carved slate, he carved granite).

During the Symposium Karen demonstrated letter-carving, creating three pieces that were sold at auction to benefit the Stone Foundation. Thanks Karin.
L-R: Happy stonecarvers James Sundquist, Ken Kealey, Devin Sherwood, Dave Bastian, Ryan Niver, Anne McKinsey, Karin Sprague, Above: Rob Gil.





Russell Waddell, the executive director of the Dry Stone Conservancy in Kentucky came to the Symposium and took this video of Stone Foundation members from the US, Canada, Scotland, Ireland and

Japan rebuilding the fire circle wall: <https://www.instagram.com/p/DAZKNcHJNxl/> The video is brief but it effectively communicates the spirit of the occasion.

STONEMWORK SYMPOSIUM 2008 took place in Barre, Vermont and featured a Dry Stone Walling Workshop and a Dry Stone Walling Competition among members of the Stone Foundation and the Dry Stone Walling Association of Canada (now known as Dry Stone Canada).

In the course of the competition a stone Fire Circle Wall was built. It has not, however, weathered well and there was a consensus that it should be rebuilt. I was asked beforehand if we could do that.

“Yes indeed,” I responded, knowing that would be an interesting project for our gang and dry stone wallers from elsewhere to engage in. So **STONEMWORK SYMPOSIUM 2024** turned out to be an opportunity to redeem the work done in 2008.

There was an emphasis on Dry Stone Walling during **STONEMWORK SYMPOSIUM 2024**—not only in the presentation program but in the inclusion of this collaborative Fire Circle walling project.

The site prep, which was done prior to our arrival, involved taking down the old walls built between the granite blocks, removing the scrap stone, burnt wood and plants that had accumulated in the center over time and installing a rod at the exact center point to which a cable was attached that could be used to scribe the inner and outer arcs of the wall.

Then, during the morning demonstration periods on Wednesday and Friday, two of the three mornings of the Symposium which were rain-less, dry stone wallers from the Stone Foundation, with several from Dry Stone Canada and a few from The Stone Trust—as well as single representatives from the Dry Stone Walling Associations of Ireland, the UK and Japan—working collaboratively, were close to completing the rebuilding of the 10 sections of the fire circle wall.

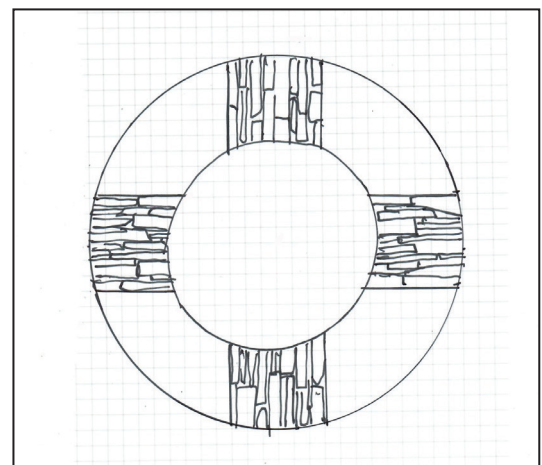
So, on Friday instead of taking a break and going to town for dinner for two hours between the afternoon and evening presentation sessions as usual, folks stayed at the Museum. Thea Alvin shopped for ingredients and cooked a hearty soup, the work went on and the Fire Circle Wall was essentially finished.

The next day, Saturday, the annual Granite Festival would take place and it occurred to me that a Fire Pit at the center—which was not part of the original plan—could be built that morning.

Since the new walls were lower than the original ones (better for seating) there was enough stone left over and I thought our crew was capable of doing the work in a half day—and, for those coming to the Festival, it would be a performance to watch.

When I raised the idea on Friday night folks were up for it. Michael Joseph Fearnhead, the representative from the Dry Stone Walling Association of Ireland made a suggestion: how about orienting the stones in the fire pit wall vertically? An interesting idea, but there was a problem with it—in a radial format, the stones, most of them at least, would need to be tapered towards the center to fit together—and they weren't.

Doing some sketches later Friday night though, I found an answer to the problem. It involved contrasting sections of vertically and horizontally oriented stonework: two 'lanes' of upright stones that would cross the circle on the North-South, East-West axes. The sides of these lanes being parallel, the upright stones between them wouldn't have to be tapered.



And, if the top edges of the upright stones were not trimmed level with the tops of the horizontally laid sections, but allowed to extend irregularly above them, not only would there be a saving of time and effort, but they would resemble the flames of the fire within the circle, which, I thought, would be pleasing (it is).

So that's what we did. And later that night, after our communal dinner in the Museum, we built the first fire in the new Fire Pit at the center of the new Fire Circle Wall... and joyfully celebrated.

