

[Back Cover - This Was Marble Mountain](#)ISSUE : [Issue 22](#)

Published by Ronald Caplan on 1979/6/1

This V' Marble Mountain Alexander Fortune: You often wonder why it's called Marble Mountain, because when the steel company was here they weren't doing any marble work. They were taking dolomite out of here for making steel in Sydney. Lime rock forms some form of flux in the process. They took a lot of rock out of here--blue rock and white rock • but it wasn't marble, in that sense. But in the early 1880s here • of course I wasn't born but I heard about this--they had a marble mill down here. And they used to go way back on the mountain and dig down in holes and cut the stone in big blocks and haul it down to the marble mill. There's holes a way back here, a place they call the Klondike--used to be pasture one time. The steel company used to let their horses loose up there on top of that hill • horses that weren't well, that had sore shoulders or something. We used to go out to see them as kids and used to go to these caves on top, where they used to quarry the stone for the marble mill. The holes are there yet. The marble mill made sheets of marble, mostly for tombstones. A. D. MacFadyen: Getting the rock out in the crude state, you'd want slabs. You had to be trained to do it because you couldn't use explosives. Well, okay, you'd drill holes here and here and here and so on • I don't know just how far apart • and then they put "feathers" down, little slips of iron, thin ones. Then a plug went down like a chisel • and you drove it down that hole. You'd have to be trained to know how many times you were going to hit this one and this one and this one and back again--so you wouldn't spoil it, crack it. Oh, it was a special trade of its own. It was called "plugs and feathers." They'd take those slabs from the wall that way. Alex Fortune: They had horses and a stone boat (a drag with wide wooden runners) to take those slabs down over the hills to the shore. (The slabs were sawed, evidently with steam-driven saws. The cutting was done underwater to carry the dust out of the grooves.) And then they polished the marble. They used steel shavings. And I heard there was a clay of some kind used for the final polish. It would make it beautiful.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24