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Continued expansion in New England

By Michael Reis



New England Stone Industries (NESI) purchased this large-scale fabrication plant in North Kingstown, RI, in 1999.

The growth of New England Stone, LLC (NES) was punctuated with the acquisition of an architectural fabrication plant in North Kingstown, RI

Over the years, New England Stone, LLC (NES) has enjoyed a pattern of steady growth through the acquisition of plants and quarries around the country. And the company's most recent acquisition -- a large architectural fabrication plant in North Kingstown, RI -- strengthens NES's position within its own region as well.



A large reserve of blocks inventory is maintained on

the premises.

The company, which had been based in Esmond, RI, acquired the plant two years ago. The facility had been previously operated by Castellucci Stone International. With the acquisition, NES's administration offices have moved to North Kingstown, about 30 miles south of Esmond.

The plant is equipped with Gaspari Menotti gangsaws, although only two were operational when the factory was first acquired. But NES quickly began working on the equipment, and at the time of Stone World's visit to the plant, all of the saws were up and running. Blocks are also processed on Pellegrini diamond wire saws, with one operating in North Kingstown and three more in Esmond.

Recently, the company purchased computerized Pellegrini diamond saws, which run on six axes and allow for fabrication of intricate

stonework. Other equipment at the North Kingstown plant includes block saws from Loeffler and other German manufacturers with blades of various diameters, a Breton cross-cutting machine and polishing line, an automated Pellegrini flaming machine, Thibaut radial arm polishers and a Park Industries Hydra-Split splitting machine. Additionally, the company's skilled sculptors use a broad range of hand tools.

In addition to upgrades in the plant itself, the North Kingstown office has its own drafting department, which has added to the overall efficiency of the operation. Recently, the company began outputting shop drawings with CAD technology.

A pattern of growth

The acquisition of the North Kingstown plant is the latest in a long history of expansion and advancement for company founder Tony Ramos, who came to the U.S. from Portugal as a teenager during the 1960s. Ramos, who was an apprentice stonecarver in Portugal, first worked in the U.S. for Castellucci & Sons in Rhode Island. After a few years, he started Ramos Statuary Studio, which produced carved stone sculptures, and he later moved into all aspects of stone fabrication with a plant in Esmond, RI, called New England Stone Industries.



Equipment at the North Kingstown plant includes bridge saws from Loeffler and other German manufacturers.

In 1979, Ramos purchased the historic quarry for Deer Isle granite on Crotch Island off the coast of Maine, which had originally been opened in the mid-1800s. Stone from this quarry was used for a broad range of classic architectural works, including the base of the Statue of Liberty and Rockefeller Center in New York as well as the Kennedy Memorial and the base course of many historic buildings in New England.

Ramos' operation expanded further in 1987, when it purchased Georgia Stone Industries of Elberton, GA, which included 11 quarry sites as well as gangsaws, which introduced the company to slab fabrication. Although the plant has since been sold, the quarry sites remain under the company's ownership.

NES has quarried and fabricated stone for a broad range of prestigious architectural projects over the years, including the Pulitzer Fountain, the AT&T Building and the Foley Square Federal Office Building in New York; the U.S. Courthouse, Federal Building and Post Office Square in Boston; and the Mellon Bank Center in Philadelphia.

Structuring the operations

NES now operates eleven quarries around the country, including the following sites:

* Dakota Mahogany and Sequoya, Milbank, SD

* Deer Isle and Sherwood Pink, Stonington, ME



The plant fabricates a broad

range of architectural work,
including radius-cut elements.

- * Jet Mist, Rapidan, VA
- * Kershaw, Kershaw, SC
- * Missouri Red, Iron County, MO
- * Oconee, Greene County, GA
- * Sparta Pink, Sparta, GA
- * Midnight Grey, Oglethorpe County, GA

The company quarries a total of 200,000 cubic feet of material per year, with about half of that total being sold as blocks. The remaining 100,000 cubic feet is fabricated at the company's two fabricating plants.

With the acquisition of the North Kingstown plant, the company has been gradually been moving its base of operations there, with the Esmond plant serving as a satellite facility. The company now has a total of 70 employees, including workers in both factories, the offices and quarries. In keeping with its primary objective, the North Kingstown plant was working on many different architectural projects at the time of Stone World's visit, including the AOL/Time Warner Building, which is being done in Jet Mist granite; 300 Madison Avenue in New York, which is being done in Midnight Grey granite; and the New York State Comptroller's facilities in Albany, NY, which is being done in Missouri Red granite.

NES has also begun quarrying and drafting work on the National World War II Memorial. The monument is to be situated in the center of the mall in Washington, DC, between the Washington and Lincoln Memorials. NES will quarry a total of 50,000 cubic feet of Kershaw granite to complete this 100,000-cubic-foot project. The memorial design includes 56 pillars, four fountains, two arches, paving, steps and numerous other items -- all in granite. Two oversized blocks measuring 12 x 8 x 6 feet -- with a weight of 120,000 pounds each -- will be needed for two balconies. The project is scheduled to be completed by March 2004, and new equipment will be purchased to fabricate this enormous project.

But with the upgraded stoneworking capacity in place, NES is also actively pursuing other architectural work while completing its current lineup of projects.

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