

a StonExcursion with friends in RHODE ISLAND & MASSACHUSETTS

Enroute to the Stone Foundation Regional Gathering in Barre, Vermont in 2011, we stopped in Rhode Island at the invitation of friends Kevin Baker and his wife, Laura Willson. Kevin is a stonemason who lives and works near Providence, Rhode Island where he said there was admirable stonework that I would be interested in seeing. He was right. For two days we trucked around through a kaleidoscopic stonescape that reflected the variations in the underlying geology and the skill and ingenuity of those who built with it.

Here are a dozen pages of photographs of the more marvellous of the many marvelous assemblages of stone and rock we encountered in our meandering.

left and below: Roadside entryway and cliffside retaining wall, Ocean Avenue, Newport, Rhode Island. These walls were painstakingly constructed using the native shale rock of Aquidneck Island where Newport is located. The columns have been robbed of their bluestone caps and those seen here on the walls were gone a year later.



Swan Point Cemetery,

overlooking the Seekonk River in Providence RI, is one of the country's first and finest garden cemeteries. It was established in 1846, and some of Rhode Island's most prominent citizens are interred here.

Of particular interest to us stonies were a number of marble monuments in one corner of the cemetery which seemed to have been done by the same hand, or at least at the same workshop. The floral elements released from the marble block by a skilled and sensitive carver were more than merely decorative—they were nearly alive.

Flowers, though, are ephemeral and marble is soluble, and the forms lovingly realized long ago—by hands that no longer exist—are gracefully surrendering themselves to time and weather.

right: Also of interest: the boundary wall and entryway built in 1894 using boulders excavated from the estate. Visit the Stonexus page at Facebook.com for an old photo of these stones shown here being placed.

below: The old fieldstone trolley depot just opposite the entryway shown at right. It was built in 1903.

facing page: the marble carvings described above.







Providence. . .

above and left: Hand hammered perimeter wall bordering an old estate on Blackstone Boulevard, Providence, Rhode Island. As we were standing in the street admiring this wall a passing car slowed and stopped and its driver came over to check us out. He turned out to be Rhode Island stonemason and Stone Foundation member, Neil Best.

below: The borderline between Guatemala and Rhode Island. It is located on Power Street in the historic East Side of Providence. Heavy machinery needed for a construction project in the estate bordered by the wall on the left could not pass through the roofed entryway so the wall adjoining it was removed to provide access. When the project was complete the wall was rebuilt by a crew of Guatemalan stonemasons. Evidently they were not compelled, officially or personally, to replicate the local style of stonework even though they used at least some of the same stone and had an excellent example to emulate in the immediate vicinity. And on that note. . .our excursion ended. We hope you enjoyed it. □

