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# HISTORY

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earth that occurred along what we know as the San Andreas Fault. This left a deposit of prefractured granite rock, an invaluable component in road-building and other building and construction uses.

The two men who forged Granite Rock Co. out of that huge deposit were Arthur Roberts Wilson, an engineering graduate of Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Warren Porter, member of one of the Pajaro Valley's most prominent families. Porter, son of Watsonville banker John T. Porter, saw the opportunity when his father's bank foreclosed on a tiny quarry at Aromas. He talked Wilson, who was running a quarry near Oakland, into joining him in forming Granite Rock Co., which was incorporated on Feb. 14, 1900.

From that beginning, Granite Rock has matured into one of the premier quarry operations in the nation, although it had to survive some, uh, rocky times. The 1906 earthquake, for ex-

ample, destroyed most of the equipment at the Aromas (now A. R. Wilson) quarry. But the quake also created a new demand for construction and Granite Rock, which had added construction to its quarrying activities, helped build a number of important buildings in earthquake-ravaged San Francisco and around the Monterey Bay area.

The company paved most of the streets of Watsonville, Santa Cruz, Salinas and other area communities in the days before World War I. In 1922, Wilson, who had become majority shareholder and company president after purchasing Porter's shares, established Granite Construction Co. as a separate operating entity, and in 1924 he began Central Supply Co. as a distributor of construction materials.

The company suffered its toughest times, along with the rest of the nation, during the Great Depression. A. R. Wilson died in 1929, and his second wife, Anna, had assumed the presidency, with his son, Jeff, as general manager. During those

depression years, work was so scarce at the quarry that a whistle was blown to call men in when as little as one car of rock was ordered. Unable to offer regular employment, the company made interest-free loans to its employees to cover medical bills.

Struggling to keep Granite Rock and Central Supply afloat, the Wilson family sold its interest in Granite Construction Co. to Walter Wilkinson and Bert Scott in 1936 and sold branches of Central Supply Co. in San Jose, South San Francisco and San Luis Obispo.

But with the coming of World War II and the tremendous demand for construction of army bases such as Fort Ord and Camp McQuaide and the Navy airstrip in Watsonville, the company rebounded and has prospered ever since.

By the early 1950s, Jeff Wilson had left the company and Anna Wilson had handed the presidential reins to her daughter, Mary Elizabeth (Betsy) Wilson Woolpert. It was a time of growth, and new plants were acquired in Salinas, Felton, Santa Cruz and Los Gatos. Central

Supply Co. purchased its first fleet of transit-mixer trucks from Ford Motor Co. in Salinas.

During the 1960s and '70s, when Betsy Woolpert's husband, Bruce, had assumed the company presidency, the company continued to expand in sand, concrete, asphaltic concrete and building-materials operations. Central Supply Co. was merged with Granite Rock to form one company for production and sales of construction material.

In the 1980s, the company undertook a major modernization of the Aromas quarry. A giant mobile crusher — the largest of its kind in the world — was designed and built, and a computer-controlled, automated truck and rail car-loading system was installed.

Today, A. R. Wilson's grandsons, and Betsy and Bruce Woolpert's sons, Bruce W. and Stephen W. Woolpert, are company co-presidents, presiding over a family-owned and operated company with more than 400 employees in 12 locations stretching from South San Francisco to Monterey.

— Bud O'Brien

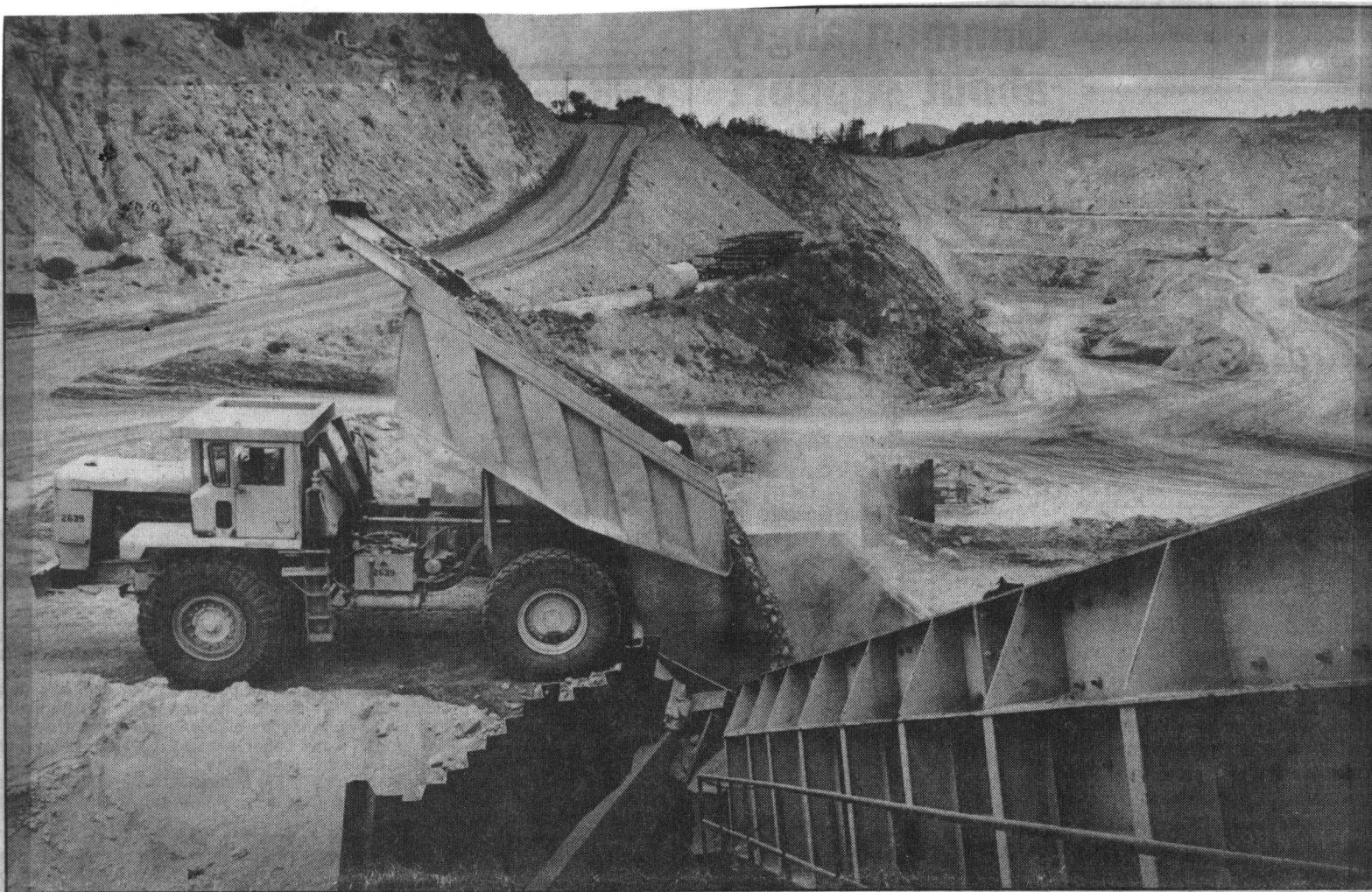
## Granite Rock goes back a long time

Granite Rock Co. can trace its origins back more than 200 million years.

The company owes its existence, as well as its name, to the huge mass of molten granite that began to push up eons ago from the depths of the earth below the region where Santa Cruz, Monterey and San Benito counties now converge.

As the granite cooled and hardened, it was folded, broken, crushed and uplifted by the tremendous movements of the

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Kurt Ellison

With the A.R. Wilson Quarry in the background, a load of granite was loaded into a rock crusher in Aromas this morning.