

A GREAT GIFT: DOOR COUNTY LIMESTONE

Matt Stender and Tim Smith, of Lily Bay Sand and Gravel Company, placed a very appropriate monument in The Garden Door. It is a piece of the Niagara Escarpment located in the Butterfly Garden.

This piece of limestone represents the most valuable mineral in the world, calcium carbonate. It has over 200 uses and without it we would not have steel or concrete. It has also played an important role in the history of Door County.



It has Town of Sevastopol (the location of The Garden Door) importance. In 1859 an assemblage of pioneers met in George Bassford's home in the Town. (The Bassford house is now preserved at The Farm.) With a "whoop and holler" they adopted the name Sevastopol. John Peter Smith, a geography buff, suggested the name. One of his reasons for it was that the area had the same limestone and soil conditions as the region on the Crimean Peninsula, particularly Sevastopol on the Black Sea.

The early settlers needed a setting agent for mortar, log building calking, calcimine (paint) and whitewash. A two cell, square limekiln on the now Erwin Smejkel farm was the source of this valuable material. Limestone was "burned" in this twin kiln and produced calcium oxide, or quicklime, CaO. It was slacked to calcium hydroxide, Ca(OH)₂. This is the compound that served the pioneer needs mentioned above.

Some of the quarries of Door County provided limestone as the flux in producing steel and calcium hydroxide for Portland cement. The stone was shipped by boat to Michigan and the steel mills of Illinois and Indiana.

Door County limestone is a double carbonate of magnesium and calcium, technically dolostone.

Of special interest to gardeners is the fact that limestone is the parent of our alkaline soil. Many plants require a sweet (high ph) soil.

A very common use of "lime" is for farm building floors. It is ground limestone, commonly called barn lime.

Thanks to Matt and Tim for this two ton, 425 million year old, everlasting gift!

Written by Carl Scholz