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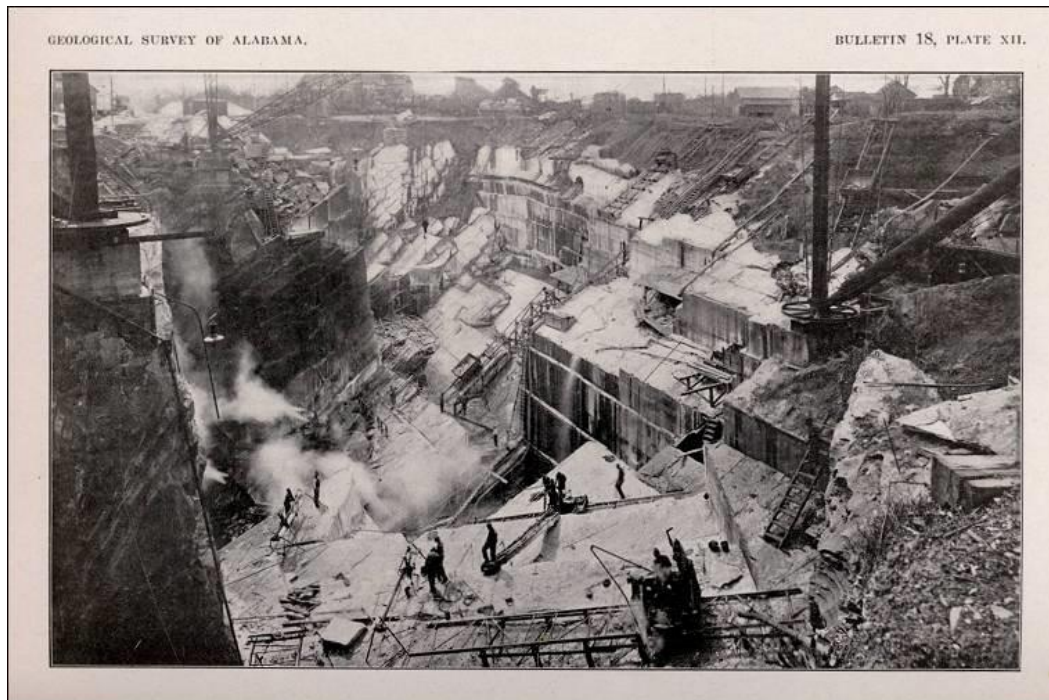
## **Brief History of Marble Quarrying in Alabama**

**By Fred Barnard**

Marble deposits near Sylacauga, a city 40 miles southeast of Birmingham, are famous for their high-quality marble, especially pure white marble for sculptural purposes (often compared to Carrara marble from Italy) and lightly-veined marble for ornamental building stone. The 2022 MHA Conference will offer an all-day excursion to an active quarry, plus visits to a sculpture studio and exhibits of sculptures by international sculptors.

This marble (metamorphosed limestone) occurs in the Piedmont region of east-central Alabama. A major quarry was established in 1834, followed by several others. The largest operation, Gantt's Quarry, extended for thousands of feet in length and hundreds of feet in depth. Today it is flooded, but other active mines are nearby. Each spring the city of Sylacauga hosts a Marble Festival, with sculptural exhibits and competitions, including European sculptors.

Sylacauga marble gradually gained fame for its use in monuments and buildings, especially after the Italian-born sculptor Guiseppe Moretti began using it around 1904. In Washington, DC, examples include a Lincoln bust by Gutzon Borglum in the Capitol Rotunda, the Latter-Day Saints Temple, parts of the Lincoln Memorial and the Supreme Court Building, and others. Many other public and private buildings around the country also feature Sylacauga marble.



Gantt's Quarry, 1915

Only a small percentage of the marble is used today for sculptural purposes, and a larger amount for ornamental stone, such as facings or floors in buildings. Due to its purity, most mined marble is used in powdered form as paper coating, pharmaceutical fillers, paint pigment, and as a soil conditioner.



Lincoln Bust by Gutzon Borglum.

## References:

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