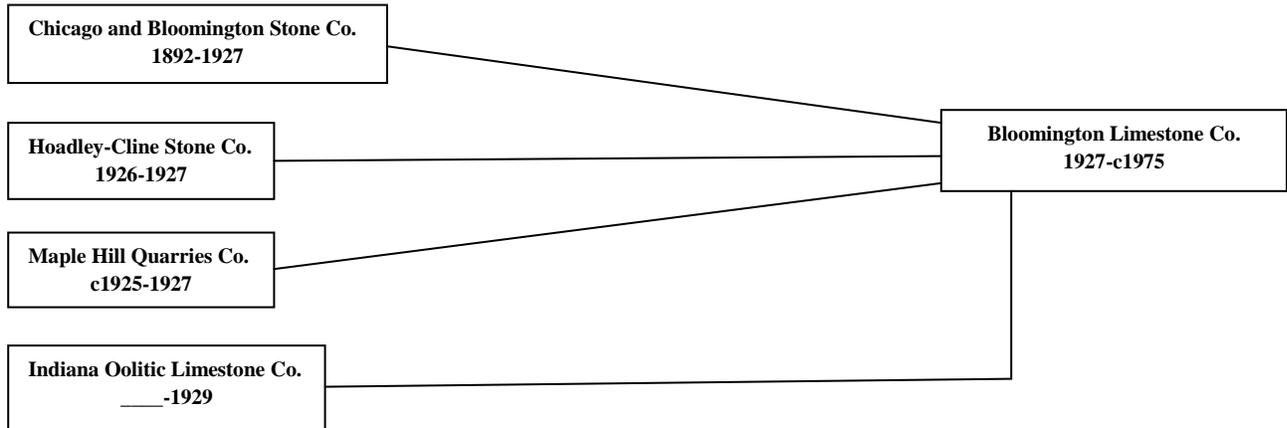


## BLOOMINGTON LIMESTONE COMPANY



After the merger in 1926 of twenty-four limestone companies that resulted in the formation of the mighty Indiana Limestone Company, mergers were in the air. In 1927 a merger in Monroe County resulted in the formation of the Bloomington Limestone Company (BLC). For almost fifty years it was a major player in the Indiana Limestone business.

### **Chicago and Bloomington Stone Co.**

The Chicago and Bloomington Stone Company was organized in July, 1892, by William Johnson, Henry Haust, Jr., John Lait, William L. Kerber, and Alexander H. Gibson. All were from Chicago.<sup>1</sup> William H. Johnson was born in 1842 in Darlington, England and came to America in 1866. Beginning in 1873 he became a stone broker and after a short time in Bedford, he moved to Bloomington in 1892 and organized, with the aforementioned others, the Chicago and Bloomington Stone Co. In that year it became the second company to begin quarrying in the Hunter Valley northwest of Bloomington when it opened the Johnson Quarry.<sup>2</sup> Eventually that quarry was abandoned and in 1903 a quarry was begun in the Sanders District and in 1904 a mill was built there. After the formation of BLC the mill was called the Johnson Mill.

Another mill was built about 1923 in Clear Creek.<sup>3</sup> After the merger it became known as the Wylie Mill of BLC and often as the Skinner Mill after B. F. Skinner who was a

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<sup>1</sup> *Monroe County Misc. Records*, Book 3, p. 172.

<sup>2</sup> Raymond S. Blatchley, *The Indiana Oolitic Limestone Industry in 1907*, p. 379 for the information about the Hunter Valley area and p. 393 for the information about the Sanders District.

<sup>3</sup> Albert T. Hoadley, "History Indiana Limestone," an unpublished manuscript quotes a Jan. 11, 1923 article in the Bloomington *Evening World* as stating that "Chi. Blgtn Stone Co operated now by Harry Johnson built a new mill south of clear creek Station.... This manuscript had a tortuous history. It was given to John Patton at the Indiana Geological Survey for him to render it into a publishable form. He found that not to be possible and gave the manuscript to Bill McDonald who was president of the Indiana Limestone Institute for him to give it a try. Bill couldn't either and gave the manuscript to me as a source for my research. Patton, McDonald, and Hoadley are all dead now.

superintendent.<sup>4</sup> After BLC went out of business the mill became a creosote plant and today it survives as building holding several businesses.

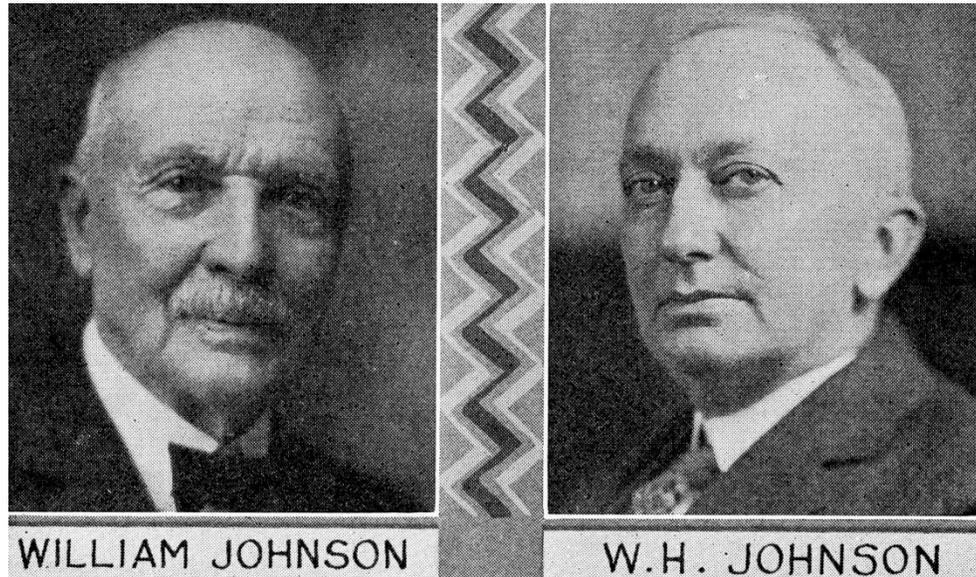
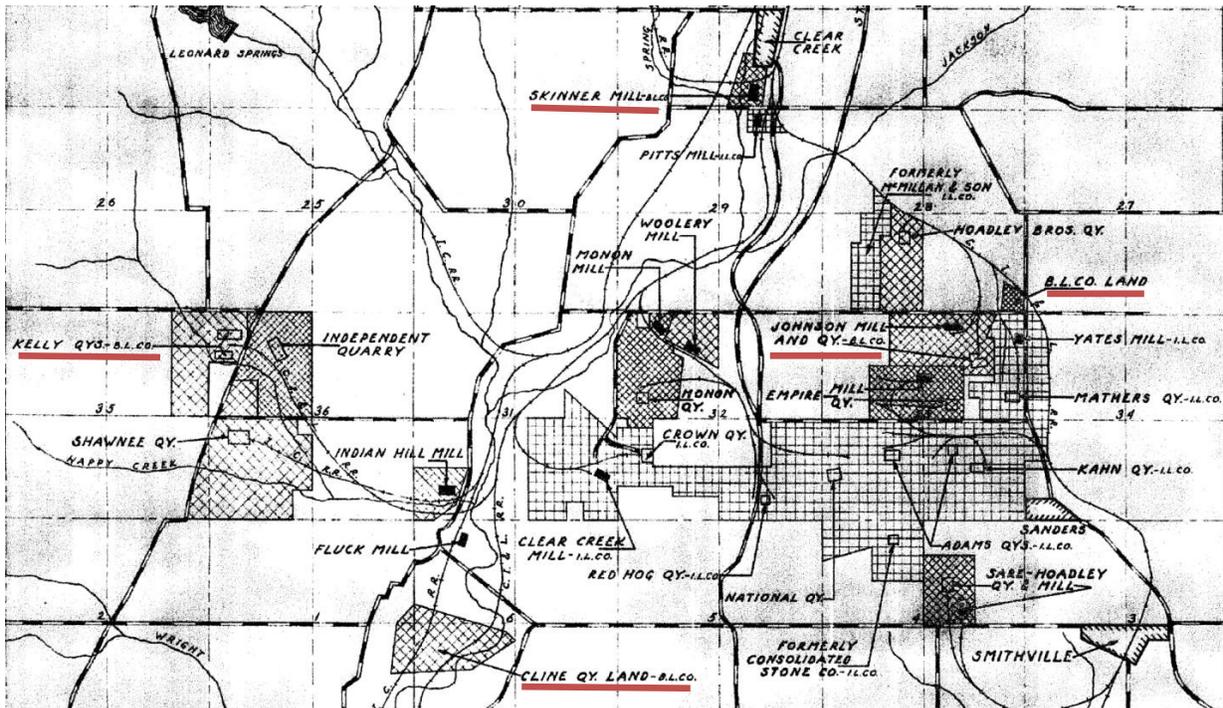
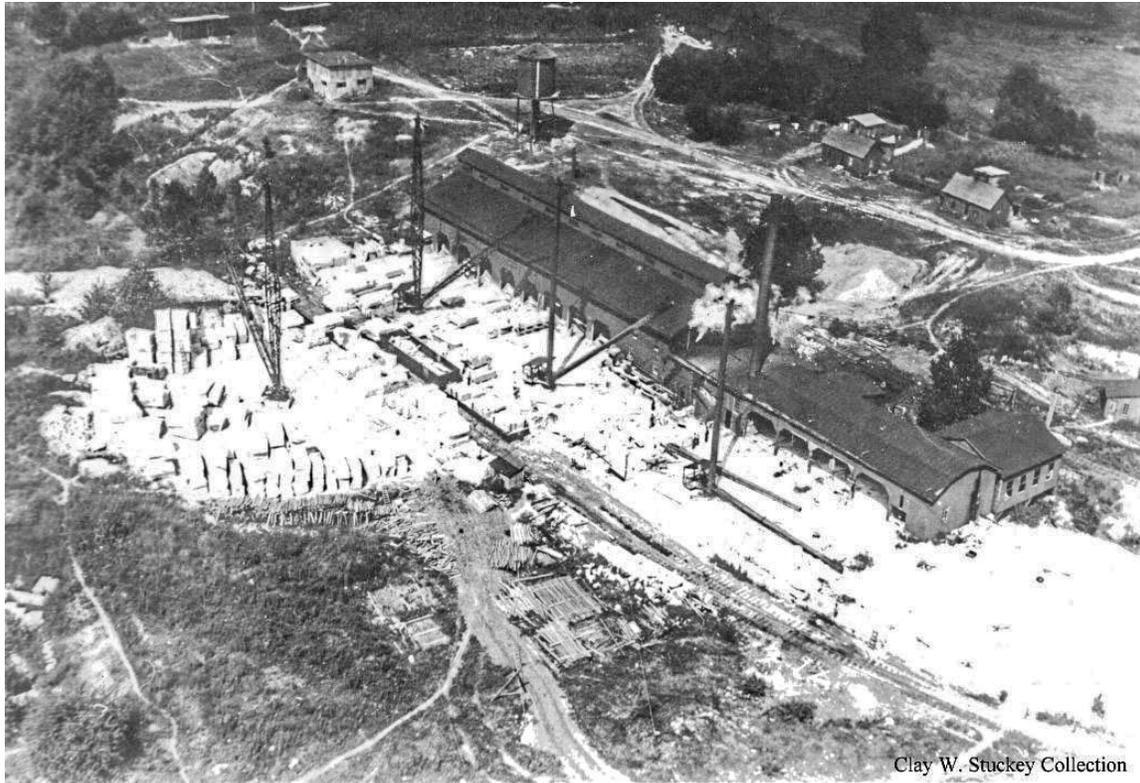


Fig. 1 This is from the *Quarries and Mills*, “William Johnson Dean of Stone Industry”, May, 1929, p. 14. William was the father and W. H. Johnson was his son.



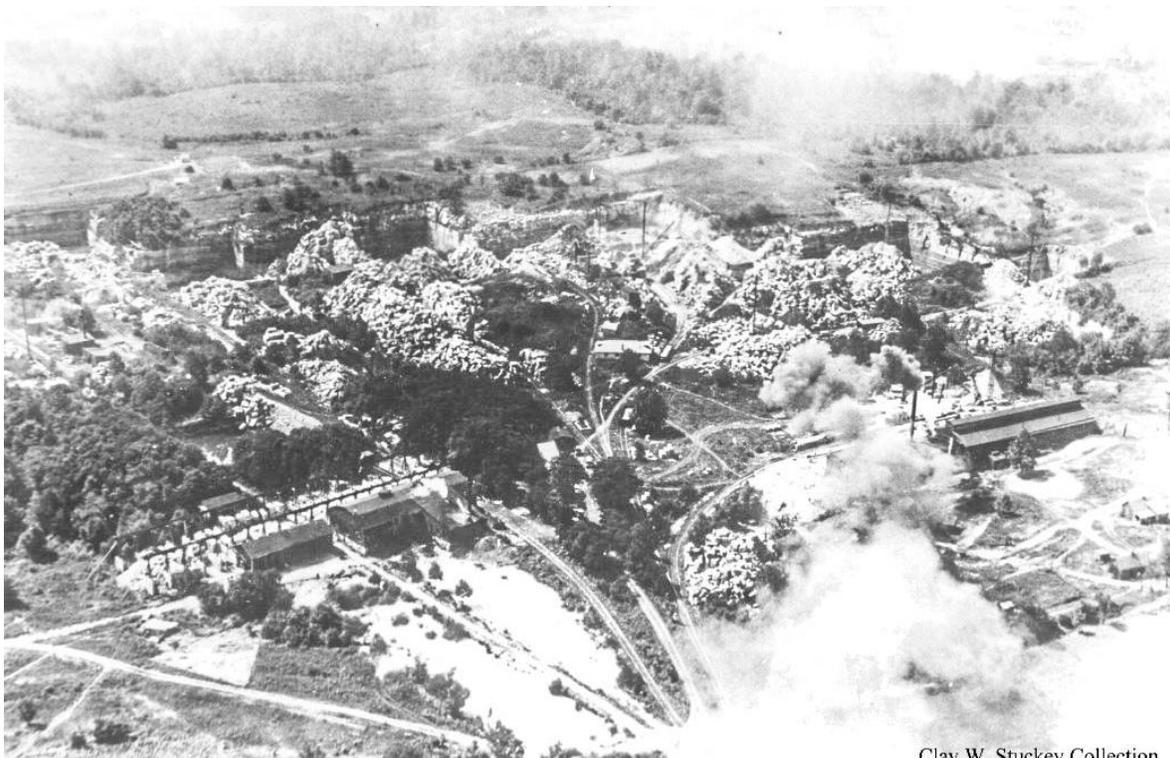
This map is from a “Map of Indiana Oolitic Limestone District Monroe County-Lawrence County Indiana Prepared by the Building Stone Association of Indiana Incorporated Bloomington Indiana 1931.” Bloomington Limestone Company holdings are underlined in red.

<sup>4</sup> Clay W. Stuckey, “Gazetteer of Limestone Mills of Owen, Monroe, and Lawrence Counties to 1950,” unpublished manuscript, 1989, p. 30.



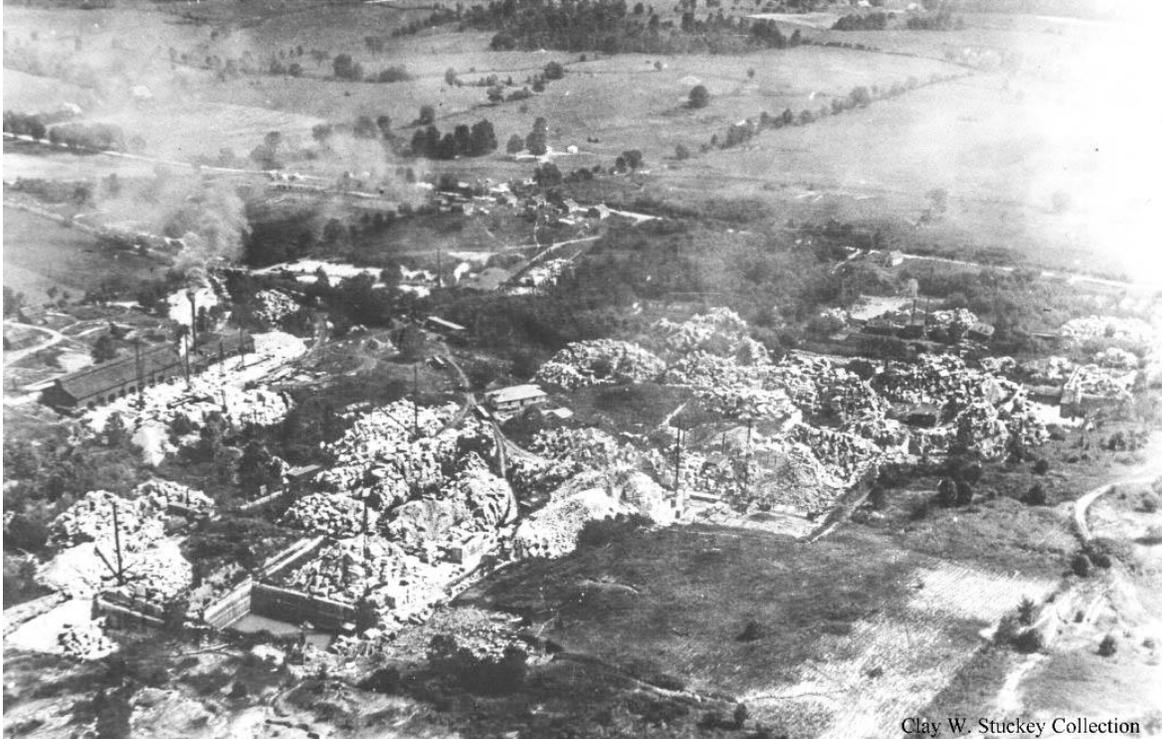
Clay W. Stuckey Collection

**Fig. 2** This 1923 picture is looking northwest at the Chicago and Bloomington Stone Co. Mill. It was later the Johnson Mill of the BLC. This picture is courtesy of Eddie Evans.



Clay W. Stuckey Collection

**Fig. 3** This 1923 view is looking southwest at the Mathers Stone Company Mill (later Yates Mill) on the left and the Chicago and Bloomington Stone Co. Mill (later the Johnson Mill of BLC) on the right. The picture is courtesy of Eddie Evans.



Clay W. Stuckey Collection

**Fig. 4** This 1923 view is looking northeast and shows the Chicago and Bloomington Stone Mill (later the Johnson Mill of BLC) in the left middle. Fairfax Road runs across the upper part of the picture. It is courtesy of Eddie Evans.



Clay W. Stuckey Collection

**Fig. 5** This c1940 view from Albert T. Hoadley is looking north at the Chicago and Bloomington Stone Co. Clear Creek Mill (later the Wylie Mill of BLC). It was also called by some the Skinner Mill.



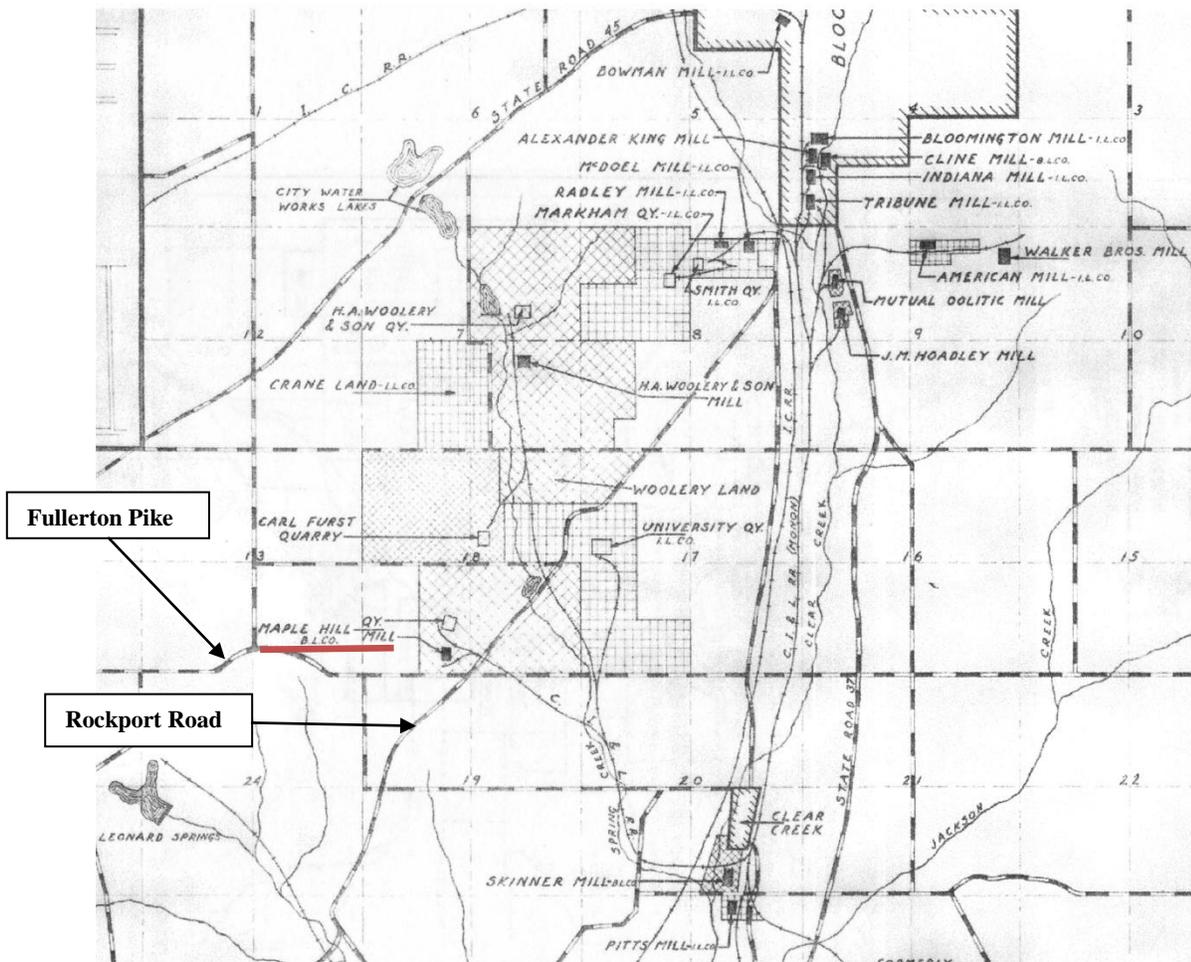
**Fig. 6** This c1940 view from Albert T. Hoadley is looking east at the Forburger-Harris Mill slightly left of center and the Chicago and Bloomington Stone Co. Clear Creek Mill (later the Wylie Mill of BLC) at the top. The Monon mainline railroad runs across the far side of the Wylie Mill as does Rogers Street. A Monon spur runs east and west at the left side of the picture and an Illinois Central Railroad spur runs across just above the Forburger-Harris Mill. The strip of land to the left of the Monon spur in the left of the pictures was the back Southeast corner of the farm where the author group up.



**Fig. 7** This modern view by the author is looking northwest at the old Wylie Mill building in Clear Creek. It is no longer being used as a stone mill.

## Maple Hill Quarries Co.

The Maple Hill Quarries Company was begun sometime in the 1920s. It appears in the *Bloomington City Directory* for 1927-28 but not before. There is, however, a gap in the books for 1925-1926. Presumably the mill was built soon after and it definitely appears on a map dated 1931. There is a quote in the *Bloomington Telegraph* for Dec. 7, 1925 that states “Maple Hill quarries Co., Inc., incorporated in Maryland for \$200,000. The company [sic] owned and operated by William and Harry Johnson, operators of the Chi[cago] and Blgtn Stone Co.”<sup>5</sup> Harry was William Johnson’s son. In the later stages of the decline of the Bloomington Limestone Company, the Maple Hill Quarry was operated by B. G. Hoadley Quarries Co. C & H Stone Company leased the mill and eventually bought it. It is located to the northwest of the junction of Fullerton Pike and Rockport Road. The C&H Stone Company survives to this day. It is not known by this author to what extent the quarries are owned or operated by Hoadley or C&H and both firms are still in the stone business.



This 1931 map was cited before. The Bloomington Limestone Co. Quarry and Mill is underlined in red.

<sup>5</sup> This quote is to be found in the Albert T. Hoadley “History,” p. 134.



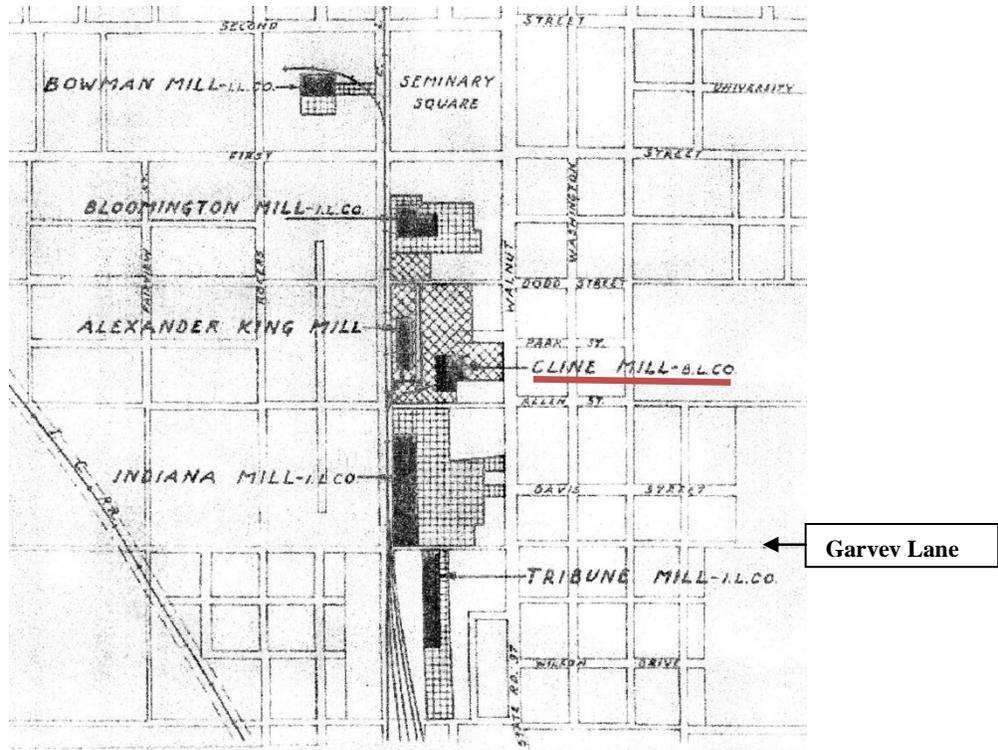
**Fig. 8** This late 1980s picture by the author is looking north at the C&H Limestone Co. Mill. It continues to this day.

### Hoadley-Cline Stone Co.

The Hoadley-Cline Stone Company was begun in 1926 by Kenneth Cline and Ellsworth Hoadley. Both had stone dust in their veins. Kenneth Cline was the son of Minnie Hoadley who was a sister to John W. Hoadley and a daughter of John Hoadley who had begun the clan. She had married Minter Cline who had worked for her father in the Stinesville mill and had been a partner with John W. Hoadley in the formation of the Hoadley Stone Co. Ellsworth Hoadley was a son of Elmer Ellsworth Hoadley who was a brother of John W. Hoadley. He sold out his interest in the Hoadley-Cline Stone Co. a few months before the merger to form BLC and moved to Columbus, Ohio where he built a stone mill which he operated until his death.<sup>6</sup> They built a new mill between Walnut Street and the Fagan Stone Co. Mill. Their mill was directly behind their office which was along Walnut Street.

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<sup>6</sup> Albert T. Hoadley "History," p. 135-6.



This excerpt from the 1931 map cited earlier shows mills in Bloomington. The BLC holdings are underlined in red.



Fig. 9 This 1923 view provided by Albert T. Hoadley is looking southeast at the Fagan Mill along the bottom. The Cline Mill of the Bloomington Limestone Co. is above and to the right. The office building for the BLC is made up of the two structures at right angles to each other connected by the covered passageway shown in the center. Walnut Street runs across the top and Dodds Street is runs perpendicularly to it in the lower left.



Fig. 10 This picture is from the Stark Collection of the old Monroe County Museum. It is looking west at the office building of the Bloomington Limestone Company. There are actually two buildings connected by a covered passageway. The building on the left would have been the drafting room. The roof of the Cline Mill can be seen on the far side of the water tower.



Fig. 11 This is the same view by the author in 2015. Nothing is changed. The drafting room is obscured by the newer building on the left.

### **Indiana Oolitic Limestone Co.**

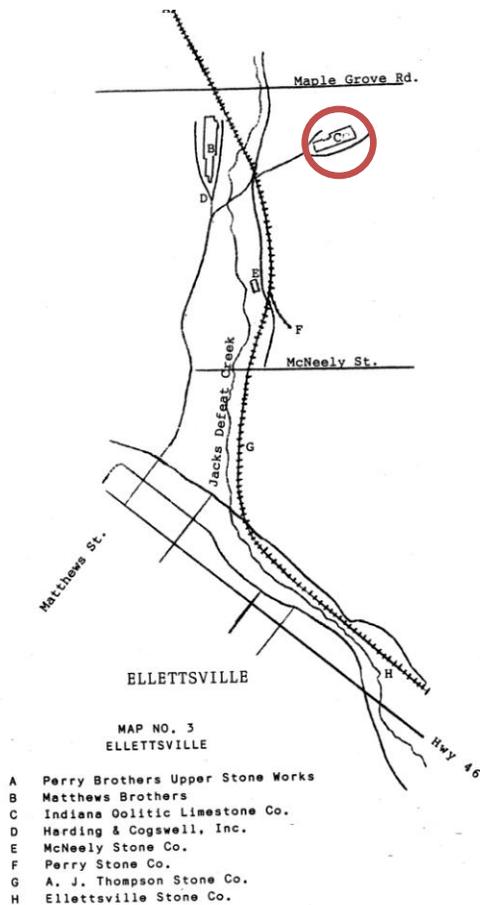
The Indiana Oolitic Limestone Company was not part of the 1927 merger that formed the Bloomington Limestone Company. The latter firm bought the former in late 1929. The description of the purchase is quoted in the *Bloomington Evening World* of August 16, 1929: “Purchase of Indiana Oolitic Limestone Co. by Bloomington Limestone involved an exchange of securities involving 600 acres of stone land includes [sic] the Wampler and Crowe quarries, two mills and the large modern mill (east of Matthews mill) at Ellettsville...”<sup>7</sup> This author is at a loss

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<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 139.

in accounting for a second mill. Perhaps I am unkind but this reference to two mills was, after all, in a newspaper article.<sup>8</sup> The one mill that can be accounted for became the Crowe mill of the BLC. The building has survived into the current age as one of the myriad of Cook, Inc. Ben P. Crowe was the president of the company at the time of its acquisition by BLC.

The origin of the Indiana Oolitic Limestone Company is a conundrum. There is simply a lacuna in the historical record. It is not mentioned in Hopkins and Siebenthal in their 1896 21<sup>st</sup> *Annual Report of the Department of Natural Resources* section “The Bedford Oolitic Limestone of Indiana,” nor in Blatchley’s *The Indiana Oolitic Limestone Industry in 1907*. It isn’t mentioned in the general history of Monroe County by Bowen in 1914. The first appearance of the name on a Sanborn Fire Insurance Map is 1929. Albert T. Hoadley in his “History,” (p.139), writes that it was a “Terre Haute, Ind. firm.” I simply know nothing about when or by whom the company was organized and started to do business.



This map by the author shows the mills in the Ellettsville area. The old Indiana Oolitic Limestone Co. Mill that later became the BLC Crowe Mill is circled. Nowadays it is a manufacturing facility for Cook, Inc. The building is circled in red.

<sup>8</sup> *Quarries and Mills*, Vol. I, No. 3, September, 1929, “Bloomington Limestone Company Buys Indiana Oolitic Company,” p. 26. This article confirms the 600 acres Wampler and Crowe quarries, but only mentions the cut stone plant at Ellettsville. It states that the BLC then operated five quarries and five mills. Five mills are accounted for which confirms the spurious figure of two mills coming from the Indiana Oolitic Company. The magazine article also states that “The deal between the two companies was consummated mostly through the exchange of securities rather than through cash.”



Clay W. Stuckey Collection

**Fig. 12** This c1940 view courtesy of Albert T. Hoadley shows the Perry Stone Co. Quarry in the middle and lower right. In the upper left is the Indiana Oolitic Limestone Co. Mill which became the BLC Crowe Mill. McNeely Street runs along the top.



Clay W. Stuckey Collection

**Fig. 13** This picture is looking slightly southwest at the Cook, Inc. facility that used to be the BLC Crowe Mill. The Matthews Mansion is in the foreground.

## Bloomington Limestone Company

In March, 1927, the “Chicago and Bloomington Stone Company, the Maple Hill Quarries Company, and the Hoadley-Cline Cut Stone Company merged with the recently organized Bloomington Limestone Company.”<sup>9</sup> I presume the BLC was organized specifically to be the end company of the merger.<sup>10</sup> It will be noted that William Johnson who became the president of the BLC was, among others, a founder of two of the companies that became the BLC. As with a lot of businesses at the time the BLC found itself unable to pay interest charges on December 1, 1932 and a reorganization of the company followed. After regrouping financially, BLC was “able during the depression to pay off all their obligations as the years went by. The end result was that the Johnsons interest was cut roughly to one third, Fred Beck, one third, and Kenneth Cline, one-third.”<sup>11</sup> After the reorganization the name became the Bloomington Limestone Corporation.

According to the Albert T. Hoadley “History,” p. 137, “Harry Johnson [William’s son] voluntarily gave up all his interest in the company and moved to Texas, organizing the Texas Quarries Co at Austin, and ran the company until he retired.” It was this company that was the source for the branch in Bloomington that became the Reed Stone Co., but that is another story.

Again relying on Albert T. Hoadley, it appears that in 1934, which would have been after the reorganization, David G. Wylie was president and was followed after World War II by George Reed, Jr., David G. Wylie’s son-in-law. The company continued to be successful and the company was noted for its promotion of use of stone for residences. It developed the technique of fabricating split-face stone and gave the result the name *Ashtone*. It also changed the way stone was prepared in the mill. Before, the stone was sawed to exactly the size and shape to fit into the wall at the construction site. Now, the stone was shipped in long strips that had not been cut into sections (jointed) and the masons on the building site cut the strips to fit. It also began to sell limestone by the ton and not by the cubic foot. Further changes flowed from the use of split-face stone including the use of trucks rather than trains in shipping.

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<sup>9</sup> Joseph A. Batchelor, Ph. D., *An Economic History of the Indiana Oolitic Limestone Industry*, Bloomington, 1944, p. 270. This book gives the financial details of the formation of the BLC and its reorganization in 1933-34.

<sup>10</sup> Albert T. Hoadley, “History,” p. 135. Here Mr. Hoadley gives evidence as on many other occasions, why Patton and McDonald had difficulty dealing with the manuscript. He writes, “Blgtn Limestone Co was first organized by S [Simeon] C Freese, (who had just sold the National stone Co to Ilco), with Charles Rawles, local banker, and R H Kelly, quarry supt. They had been able to buy land across from the Independent Stone Co on the north side of the Rockport Road, in Sec 25 Van Buren Twp. The Johnsons chose this name for their new company.” This is a further hint that the BLC had a separate and brief existence before the merger. It is confusing to this writer. A 1931 map shows Kelly Quarries owned by BLC across the road from Independent Quarry but it is section 35 and not 25.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 137. In Bachelor’s work on page 346 there is the following: “It will be recalled that the Texas Quarries Company is owned by a group of stockholders who are substantially identical with the stockholders of the Bloomington Limestone Corporation.”

By the early 1970s there was dissension in the boardroom and after the dust settled, the Reed interests were in control.<sup>12</sup> In 1975 the Cline Mill was torn down and the company office on Walnut Street was sold to an advertizing firm. The Wylie Mill in Clear Creek was sold in 1976 to the Louisville Creosote Company although today (2016) it is no longer a creosote plant. At some point and in some fashion the Maple Hill Quarries Co. became the C&H Stone Co. which continues to this day.

And thus expired one of the major independent stone companies that had played no part in the 1926 merger of twenty-four companies to produce the mighty Indiana Limestone Company. The company had a long run of almost fifty years and left a legacy of marketing innovations that spread throughout the industry. It deserves a more complete history than this small contribution of mine.

Clay W. Stuckey  
1627 P Street  
Bedford, IN 47421  
812-275-7797  
cjcstuckey@gmail.com

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<sup>12</sup> Albert T. Hoadley, "History," p. 140.