

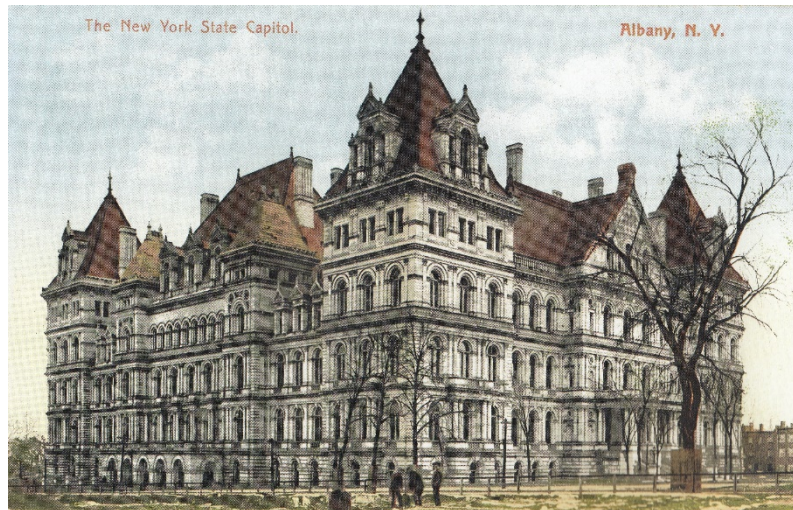
## William Tracy, Stonecutter

By William Bower Mitchell Tracy, III

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My second great grandfather, William Tracy, was born near Dublin, Ireland about 1830 and died at the age of 65 in Asbury Park, New Jersey, USA, on September 8, 1895. His residence was listed in all U.S. census records as Manhattan, New York, where his wife, Catherine (McCabe) Tracy and family of 10 children lived most of their lives. However, his occupation was stonecutter, and he spent most of his career working on building project sites in various locations, some of which were outside Manhattan.

The largest single building William worked on was the New York State Capitol building in Albany, New York, located about 150 miles up the Hudson River from Manhattan. The building started construction with the laying of its foundation, in 1869 and did not finish until 1899 when it was declared “finished” by Governor Theodore Roosevelt. It was the largest and most expensive capitol building in the United States.



The occupation of stonecutter was one that is unfamiliar to us today, since buildings are no longer constructed of stone. Stonecutters turned large, rough-hewn granite rocks that were delivered to construction sites into finished blocks of stone used in the foundations, walls, and columns of buildings. There were large crews of stonecutters at the New York State Capitol. In 1880, 536 of the 1,398 workers employed were stonecutters. Many were Irish.

William Tracy probably started working on the Capitol Building in 1881 when he was residing in Albany at 8 Norton Street, a few blocks east of the Capitol in a building that has since been replaced by an office building. He is listed in the 1881 Albany New York Directory as “William Tracy, stonecutter”. The same

William Tracy stonecutter is listed in the 1884 Albany Director at Hagar House, a hotel that offered rooms starting at \$6.00 per week.

Weather made the occupation of stonecutter seasonal work and most workers were hired in the springtime and laid off in the late fall. According to labor records found at the New York State Archives, William, with many of his fellow workers, started work on March 25, 1884 and was laid off on October 11 when work on the project was suspended. It apparently was a competitive affair to land this job because William had the recommendation of a previous employer, E. A. Moore, and a state senator, J. Hampden Robb, whose district in Manhattan included the location of William's family's apartment at 102 W. 40<sup>th</sup> St.

No. of Order	No. of Plan	Course	No. of Stones	Stones Marked	Length	Bed	Rise	Cubic Feet on Plan Lines	No. of Stones Accepted	Length
<u>Cutters</u>				<u>Employed</u>		<u>Recommendations</u>			<u>Laid Off</u>	
Derwilliger	J. R.			March 25		S. A. R.			Oct	11
Derwilliger	W. A.			" 22		Hon Patrick Burns. x P.			"	11
Derwilliger	John			" 25		Hon Patrick Burns			"	11
Derwilliger	John R.			" 25		Senator Thatchers			July	19
Derwilliger	Thomas			" 25		Senator Cullen & S. M. M. M.			July	19
Derwilliger	Patrick			" 29		Angelo Korman & S. A. Burns			July	19
Derwilliger	David			" 29		Senator Bowen			May	19
Derwilliger	Joseph			" 29		Senator Baker			April	17
Derwilliger	William			" 29		P			July	19
Derwilliger	Michael			" 29		Hon J. W. Hunted			July	19
Derwilliger	James			" 27		Hon Joseph Joyce			July	19
Derwilliger	William			" 25		Senator Robb & E. A. Moore			Oct	11
Derwilliger	Thomas			April 5		P			July	19

Two Weeks Ending <u>Oct 23</u> 1885												
NAMES.				Days of Week								AMOUNT
				P	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
M. Shaw												39 60
J. Sanders												43 20
J. H. Stow												43 20
H. Seales												42 75
G. Seyrie												36
J. Sharkey												39 60
J. Stephens												43 20
W. Savage												43 20
F. F. Schermerhorn												43 20
Geo. Slavin												43 20
H. F. Tucker												42 75
H. Sharpe												32 40
Geo. Tracy												43 20
J. R. Derwilliger												43 20

Stonecutters were well paid for the times. Labor records show that William Tracy received a paycheck for the two week period ending October 23, 1885 in the amount of \$43.20, representing 96 hours of work, including Saturdays and Sundays at 8 hours per day, or \$0.45 per hour. However, there were no paid holidays, no paid vacation or sick leave, and when the weather did not permit work, workers were not paid. Numerous labor records show days and weeks wherein the entire crew of stonecutters received no pay.

[illegible]

As a final note, the story of William Tracy's working on the New York State Capitol is prominent in my memory of my father's family stories. As an architect it has interested me, and it wasn't until I started my research a few years ago that I realized that William was a stonecutter, and not an architect. Also, my full name is William Bower Mitchell Tracy III, which started with my grandfather William Bower Mitchell Tracy born in 1887 when his family moved to Albany. My father has never told me where the "Mitchell" came from, but I now suspect it may have been James J. Mitchell, the superintendent of stonecutters at the New York State Capitol. He was also a stonecutter born in Ireland.

Some of the facts and the first two images in this paper were taken from the book “Capitol Story” by C. R. Roseberry. The record images were made by the author at the New York State Archives on October 31 and November 1, 2018.