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THE CHRONICLE-TELEGRAM

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An Amherst foundation

Rania Shakkour | The Chronicle-Telegram

Unearthing the history of the county's quarries

SOUTH AMHERST — What does the Yale University Library, the University of Michigan campus chapel and the Hockey Hall of Fame in Toronto have in common?

James Hieb excavated the answer — the buildings were all built with Amherst sandstone.

While researching information for his wife's family tree, Hieb began to come across interesting tidbits of information about the Lorain County quarries.

Officially named the Sandstone Center of the World in 2003 by the Ohio Historical Society, and unofficially named such since 1910, Hieb learned the quarries are full of history.

H.O. Baker, a dentist in Amherst, first used the phrase, Sandstone Center of the World, as a tagline on his business letterhead in 1910. Bob Hope's father worked at the quarries as a stonemason and master carver and had a role in building the Lorain-Carnegie Bridge, Hieb discovered.

Two and half years after Hieb sat down and talked with Foyster Matlock, the grandfather of Hieb's wife, Christa, about Matlock's nearly 30 years with the Cleveland Quarries, Hieb published his first book.

The 124 page book, "Sandstone Center of the World: Images and Stories of Quarry Life in Amherst, South Amherst and Lorain County," includes 140 photos and maps, dating as far back as the 1800s.

"Amherst and all of Lorain County should be proud of the heritage of sandstone and the quarry of sandstone," Hieb said.

"That's the foundation of the economic growth of this area," Sally Cornwell, of the book, added.

Between coaching youth baseball, helping with Cub Scouts and spending time listened to family's stories about the quarries.

"Families started coming out of the woodwork, telling their stories," he said. whole in the ground, you're going to have water in that whole," which set it noteworthy stories.

From swimming to ice stories, Hieb incorporated many of the tales he hear legend goes that Mori Quarry, between state Route 58 and Baumhart Roac the Ohio Turnpike from moving south and keeping the highway in the north

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Born and raised in South Dakota, Hieb moved to Lorain County 16 years ago.

The combination of his position as special projects director for the Marble Institute of America, a natural stone trade association, and Christa's family's quarry history sparked the flames for the book's creation.

When Russ Ciphers Sr. and the Cleveland Quarries donated a lot of their archives to the Amherst Historical Society, Hieb finally had the additional information he needed to complete his masterpiece.

"It's certainly been a labor of love," he smiled. "I hope families that have a tie to the quarries will appreciate, enjoy and encourage parents, grandparents and great-grandparents to tell their story to their grandchildren."

After having many family members and friends, including Firelands Middle School seventh grader Kali Hodgson, review and edit the book, the self-published book was finished.

It will be available for purchase beginning Thursday by visiting www.quarrytown.net.

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