

Schum Monuments

Founded: 1888

Location: Mariah Hill (1888–1914); 122 East Vine Street, Dale (1914–)

Andrew Schum, Sr., started the Mariah Hill Marble and Granite works in the corner of his father's dirt-floor barn. He had become interested in making monuments after he saw a craftsman in Huntingburg carve a piece from Kentucky limestone. He was just seventeen years old in 1888, and the first marker he made, written in German, was for an infant. In 1914 he moved the business to the bustling town of Dale in order to be closer to the railroad lines. In 1893 Schum married Philomena Heilers. The couple had nine children, all of whom worked for the company at some point. Philomena also worked at the business, cutting most of the intricate lettering for verses on the marble stones.

Schum was an innovator and an inventor. After the building on Vine Street was constructed, he brought his patented drilling machine and a turning lathe to Dale. The drill machine he built could cut granite faster than the conventional mallet and chisel. The lathe was not his invention, but he built one from scratch after having viewed a working model. Today most monument makers buy relatively small pieces of granite, marble, or other rock precut, but a century ago the craftsmen had to buy large slabs of material and ship it to their businesses where it would be cut into familiar shapes. Schum often traveled to Georgia for granite, transporting it back to Dale and laboriously sculpting the rock after having taken several hours to cut the stone into smaller chunks.

After Schum included his sons in the business, he renamed the firm Andrew Schum & Sons. In 1944 the senior Schum retired and sold his business to his sons,

Andrew Jr. and Benno, who gave the firm its current designation. In 1957 the partners bought the monuments division of Seufert Construction & Supply Company. The brothers continued to make monuments in the same way as their father. Rough-hewn stones were cut to size and shape by hand using various tools on site and transferred to the many small cemeteries that dot Dubois and surrounding counties. Andrew Jr. retired in the 1960s, and Benno was left as the sole owner.

Benno married Sally Hoffman, a native of Jasper, and the pair adopted two children. One of the two married Jack Troth, who became the proprietor of Schum Monuments upon the death of his father-in-law in 1978. Troth started with the company in 1970. By the time he joined Schum, the firm, like many across the nation, had started to phase out its manufacturing work of grave markers. Stones are now precut and ordered from large-scale suppliers. The company still owns a relatively inefficient wire saw used to cut the larger blocks into smaller shapes, but it is rarely used.

In many ways monument making has not changed in more than a hundred years. The rock continues to weigh between 180 and 200 pounds per cubic foot. Overhead tracks help to move the heavy stones from where craftsmen work on them to either the showroom floor or to trucks for transport to area cemeteries. Rock is hewn from many sites outside of Indiana including Minnesota, Wisconsin, South Dakota, Vermont, Georgia, India, Africa, and Canada. Interestingly, one can also find several generations of Schums and Troths still working for their grandfather's or great-grandfather's company.

Other methods have changed in addition to the cutting of rock. Most of the design work is now computer aided, but many of the intricate touches are still tuned by

hand. While rubber stencils are used to make an imprint on the rock before it is crafted, new technologies have made the work easier than that done with mallet and chisel. A diamond tip etching tool and mechanical engravers allow for more precision than the tools of a century ago.

In 1998 Troth continued to preside over the business Andrew Schum built. Troth was joined in the family firm by several workers, including his son Chris and their cousin, John Schum. The company remains in the building constructed in 1914. In its showroom one can view the first monument made by Andrew Schum, Sr.