

THE CRUSHER TRAIL

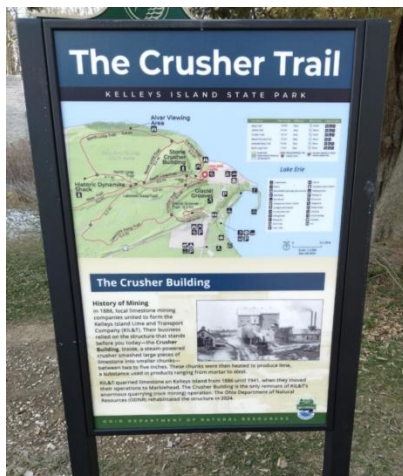
On the north side of the Island, at the end of the parking lot past the glacial grooves, is a large stone building. This was the North Side Crusher building. Along with two historic markers, there is a series of descriptive plaques describing the building, its use and the quarry operations.



EXPLORE KELLEYS ISLAND'S LIMESTONE PAST

Follow this 0.4-mile path to explore the history of limestone quarrying on Kelleys Island that shaped Island history, fueled industry, and created the landscape we see today. The stone pulled from these quarries is found in structures across the Great Lakes Region. At the end of the trail, step back in time as the Crusher Building, where workers transformed island limestone into the materials that built a region.

The Crusher building then and now

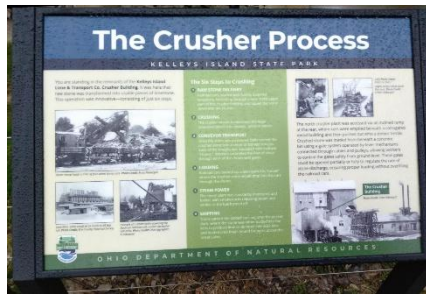


THE CRUSHER BUILDING

In 1886, local limestone mining companies united to form the Kelleys Island Lime and Transport Company (KIL&T). Their business relied on the structure that stands before you today – the Crusher Building. Inside, a steam-powered crusher smashed large pieces of limestone into smaller chunks – between two and five inches. These chunks were then heated to produce lime, a substance used in products ranging from mortar to steel.

KIL&T quarried limestone on Kelleys Island from 1886 until 1941, when they moved their operations to Marblehead. The Crusher Building is the only remnant of KIL&T's enormous quarrying (rock mining) operation. The Ohio Department of Natural Resources (ODNR) rehabilitated the structure in 2024.

Read a little more about this building [BLOG-N-side-crusher.pdf](#)



THE CRUSHER PROCESS

You are standing in the remnants of the Kelleys Island & Transport Co. Crusher Building. It was here that raw stone was transformed into usable pieces of limestone. This operation was innovative-consisting of just six steps.

1-Raw Stone Delivery – Railroad cars, loaded with freshly quarried limestone, backed up through a hole in the upper part of this crusher building, and tipped the stone down into the crusher.

2-Crushing – the crusher wheels broken down the large limestone pieces into smaller, uniform pieces.

3-Conveyor Transport – Once the stone was processed, belts carried the crushed stone into a series of storage troughs. Each of the troughs was equipped with multiple ‘chutes.’ Workers controlled the flow of stone through each of the chutes with gates.

4-Loading – Railroad cars backed up underneath this ‘tunnel’ where the crushed stone would drop into the cars through chutes.

5-Steam Power – The steam plant was constantly monitored and fueled, with smokestacks releasing steam and smoke as the fuel burned off.

6-Shipping – Trains carried the loaded cars out onto the pocket dock, where the stone was either loaded into the kilns to produce lime or dumped into tock bins and loaded onto boats bound for ports across the Great Lakes.

The north crusher plant was accessed via an inclined ramp at the rear, where cars were emptied beneath a corrugated metal building and then pushed out onto a timber trestle. Crushed stone was loaded from beneath a concrete bin using a gate system operated by lever mechanisms connected through cables and pulleys, allowing workers to control the gates safely from ground level. These gates could be opened partially or fully to regulate the rate of stone discharge, ensuring proper loading without overfilling the railroad cars.



The railroad cars could be tipped to dump the stone.



THE SMALL, BUT MIGHTY

The first island railroad was built in 1854, just 500 feet long. It used gravity to move loaded cars downhill and horses to pull empty ones back up. As the Island’s quarrying industry grew, so did the need for better transport – enter the Shay Locomotive.

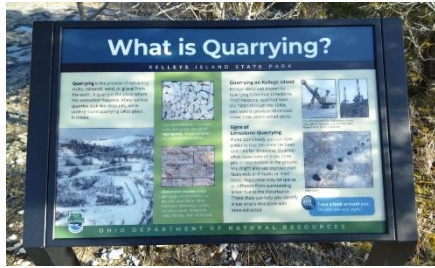
Over time, KIL&T owned and operated dozens of locomotives -the largest fleet in the country for an operation of its kind.

Built in 1898 by Lima Locomotive Works, Shay Engines were perfect for the quarry’s

rough terrain.

–Narrow body: easy to move through tight spaces

–Geared drive: Powerful enough to pull heavy loads slowly but steadily.



WHAT IS QUARRYING?

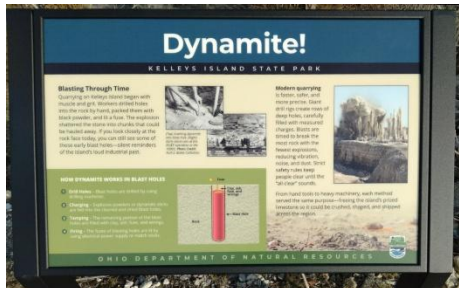
Quarrying is the process of extracting rocks, minerals, sand, or gravel from the earth. A quarry is the place where this extraction happens. Many surface quarries like deep pits, while underground quarrying takes place in mines.

Quarrying on Kelleys Island – Kelleys Island was known for quarrying Columbus Limestone. This limestone, quarried from the 1830s through the 1940s, was used to produce

dimension stone, lime, and crushed stone.

Signs of Limestone Quarrying – If you look closely, you can spot evidence that this area has been quarried for limestone. Quarries often leave behind large, open pits or depressions in the ground. You might also see exposed rock faces with drill marks or blast holes. Vegetation may be sparse or different from surrounding areas due to the disturbance. These clues can help you identify areas where limestone was once extracted.

Great photo of one of the deep quarry walls.



DYNAMITE!

Blasting Through Time – quarrying on Kelleys Island began with muscle and grit. Workers drilled holes into the rock by hand, packed them with black powder, and lit a fuse. The explosion shattered the stone into chunks that could be hauled away. If you look closely at the rock face today, you can still see some of those early blast holes – silent reminders of the Island's loud industrial past.

Modern Quarrying is faster, safer, and more precise.

Giant drill rigs create rows of deep holes, carefully filled with measured charges. Blasts are timed to break the most rock with the fewest explosions, reducing vibration, noise, and dust. Strict safety rules keep people clear until the 'all clear' sounds.

From hand tools to heavy machinery, each method served the same purpose – freeing the island's prized limestone so it could be crushed, shaped, and shipped across the region.



FROM PEBBLES TO PETALS – The Lakeside Daisy is a bright yellow wildflower found only in small, isolated pockets in the Great Lakes Region due to its unique habitat requirements. These plants thrive in alvar environments characterized by thin soils over limestone bedrock with little shade or other plant life.

These unique plants only bloom for about three weeks in May. All individuals in the population tend to bloom at the same time, creating a bright yellow sea of flowers on the otherwise harsh landscape. Once the flowers

bloom, they track the movement of the sun in the sky all day, a behavior known as heliotropism.

The Transplant Project – To boost the lakeside daisy population and diversity the locations where it is found, the Ohio Department of Natural Resources Division of Natural Areas and Preserves transplanted more than 1,000 mature flowers to this spot between 1989 and 1998. Additional seeding has added to the number of flowers present each year. The transplanted and seeded plants have seen an 85% survival rate, resulting in a new and thriving lakeside daisy community.

Visit the Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve – Back on the mainland, you can see more lakeside daisies on the Marblehead Peninsula. These beautiful wildflowers can be found at the 137-acre Lakeside Daisy State Nature Preserve just south of the ferry to Kelleys Island, about half a mile south on Alexandria Pike. The plants are located on formerly quarried ground, and just to the west of the preserve active quarrying continues to support Ohio’s building and construction industries with quarried stone. Similar to the blooming season for lakeside daisies on Kelleys Island, visit the preserve in early to mid-May for the best opportunities to see these plants in full bloom.



**Kelleys Island State Park
Crusher Trail**
Ohio Department of Natural
Resources
Division of Parks and Watercraft
2025
Dedicated to preserving and
highlighting the rich history of Kelleys
Island
and it’s important natural resources.

Mike DeWine, Governor
Mary Mertz, Director

The Kelleys Island History Museum has a nice display about quarrying on the Island: KelleysIslandHistorical.org

