

## A 20-Ton Cornerstone for Freedom Tower

By DAVID W. DUNLAP

Rather than breaking already broken ground at the World Trade Center site on July 4, Gov. George E. Pataki will instead preside as a cornerstone is laid for Freedom Tower — more than 20 tons of garnet-flecked granite from the Adirondacks.

As the tower rises atop this five-foot-high block at its southeast corner, the stone will disappear from view, finally to be obscured entirely by the underground structure filling the 70-foot-deep foundation. But it is not likely to be forgotten there.

"The cornerstone will serve as a reminder for years to come that we marked this July Fourth with a tribute to our city's resolve and rebirth," said Lynn Rasic, a spokeswoman for the governor. "It's truly fitting that this cornerstone will be made out of New York stone because this is the bedrock of New York City's future."

That rock traveled some 200 miles last week from upstate to the yard and factory of Innovative Stone Inc. in Hauppauge, on Long Island, where it is being cut, honed, polished and inscribed. Then it will be trucked into Lower Manhattan.

(The exact text of the inscription is not yet decided, Ms. Rasic said.)

The stone is a mix of black and gray, from feldspar and hornblende; pale green and white, from quartz and also from feldspar; and brownish red, from deposits of garnet as large as a half-dollar coin, said Karen Pearse, the founder and chief executive of Innovative Stone. When the sun hits the garnet facets, she said, "It's dazzling."

This particular granite, which Ms. Pearse has named the "Freedom Stone," was chosen in part because garnet is the official gem of New York State.

The block will sit atop a 14-by-16-foot foundation of concrete and steel bars at the base of Freedom Tower, which will be the tallest and most symbol-laden of the six office buildings planned on and around the trade center site.



Mary Kozicki

A granite block that will become the cornerstone for the Freedom Tower arrived on Friday at the Innovative Stone factory in Hauppauge, N.Y.

"It's literally the first piece of the foundation of the building," said Jan-ino Lieber, the trade center project director for Silverstein Properties, the developers of Freedom Tower and 7 World Trade Center, which is already under construction across Vesey Street.

Last month, Governor Pataki ended a speech on Lower Manhattan with a rhetorical flourish. "On July Fourth, as fireworks burst in the sky — ephemeral reminders of our liberty — we will begin to reclaim our skyline with a permanent symbol of our freedom," he said. "On July Fourth, 2004, we will break ground on the Freedom Tower."

But the sanctity and rawness of that ground, where the incision of a ceremonial spade would have been regarded by some as the reopening of an awful wound or the desecration of a cemetery, compelled state officials to devise another kind of ceremony.

"With some persistence and hard work," Ms. Rasic, the governor's spokeswoman, said, "the builders are going to be able to prep the site in time to lay the cornerstone."

Innovative Stone was chosen by David Worsley of Silverstein, who worked with Ms. Pearse on the Time Warner Center at Columbus Circle when he was at the Related Companies. Innovative donated the granite block, worth about \$14,000, which weighed 24 tons when it was quarried and measured 67 by 119 by 47 inches.

"This is the opportunity of a lifetime," Ms. Pearse said in a telephone interview on Friday. "I've done many projects all over the world, but nothing comes close to the significance of being able to donate this block."

The 23-year-old company, formerly Innovative Marble and Tile, has installed stonework in the Henri Bendel store and the Essex House Hotel in Manhattan, and in the MGM Grand Hotel in Las Vegas. It supplies granite countertops to Home Depot stores.

The paradox is not lost on Ms. Pearse that her most important commission will one day be the least visible. She does not sound at all troubled by that.

"For us," she said, "it will live on forever."



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