

### Building the future

The new company is currently supplying stone for a summer home in Grand Rapids, Minn., which Keopple calls a "\$10 million dollar cabin." With three stone fireplaces, stone pool coping and an exterior stone veneer, the home shows Dunnville stone to its best advantage.

Dunnville Cutstone is also now supplying stone for office complexes in Menomonie (Broadway Square) and in Sioux Falls, S.D. Other local projects include the Menomonie post office and an addition to the Rassbach museum. They also provided a stone sign and several truck loads of loose stone to the new Winona Marine Art Museum in Winona, Minn.

The stone being blasted off the sandstone shelf the crew is working on a mild October day is destined for the Sioux Falls job. After the blast it will be a huge block 75 feet long, 10 feet high and 5 feet wide. Then a series of smaller blasts will cut it down for shipping.

"We ship blocks sized 5 feet by 5 feet by 8 feet," Keopple explained.

At 115 pounds per cubic foot, such a block would weigh 23,000 pounds. Heavy as that sounds, Keopple says this is the lightest stone he is aware of on the market. Such a block would sell for \$2,500 to \$3,500, Keopple estimates. After quarrying about 1,000 tons of dimensional stone since the quarry reopened, Keopple expects to ship another 1,000 tons by the end of the year.

Dunnville Cutstone Company currently operates with four employees in addition to Keopple.

"These guys have a lot more years in this business than I do," Keopple readily admits. "But we're all still learning. And when we find a better way to do something, we do it."

That applies to the method they use to fill bore holes using a patented polymer gel known



Photo by Joel Becker

▲ Aaron Keopple carefully connects lengths of detonation cord with electrical tape prior to blasting a crack in the sandstone at the Dunnville Cutstone Company. The quarry, closed more than 60 years ago, supplied rock to many U.S. landmarks and close to home, including the Mabel Tainter Memorial Theater and the Louis Smith Tainter House in Menomonie. Also pictured is employee Brock Massey of Menomonie.



Photo by Dunnville Cutstone Company

▲ The stone is featured as a part of three fireplaces, coping around the pool, and the exterior of the cabin is highlighted by sandstone veneer.

as B-Gel.

"We are in the process of trying to buy the company that makes it, because it works so much better to get a clean fracture of the stone," he said.

With such innovations the company is also building a solid reputation for contract drilling under the name Dunnville Drilling.

### It really was a blast

With the holes filled, the detonation cord connected, and two warning hoots of the truck horn, it's time for the payoff. The detonator is energized, and the resulting explosion shoots a string of geysers 40 feet into the air.

"All B-gel, but no fly-rock," Keopple emphasized. "All the force goes inward, expanding from hole to hole." Along with the earsplitting crack

and boom of the blast, there was a concussion of air bystanders could feel in their chests, even though they were a good 50 yards away.

"They can hear it in Downsville," Keopple grinned, as they began packing up their gear. Did he make it into the shower on time? Actually, he missed it by about 10 minutes, but not to worry, he's used to loud noises. ▲

*Jim Fine is a freelance writer from Menomonie. A version of this story originally appeared in the Dunn County News, a publication of Chippewa Valley Newspapers, in October 2006. Reach the Chippewa Valley Business Report at 715-723-5515 or through [www.chippewavalleybusinessreport.com](http://www.chippewavalleybusinessreport.com).*



# Closer

ST. JOSEPH'S HOSPITAL  
CHIPPEWA FALLS