

# SLATE ROOF INDUSTRY ROUNDTABLE

An event recently occurred that may not have previously taken place in living memory. On January 22, 2002, a slate roofing industry "roundtable gathering" was held in Saratoga Springs, New York. Its intended purpose was to explore reunification of the slate industry, particularly the National Slate Association, an organization not active since, perhaps, the 1930s.

The meeting was "an effort to address the challenges that face the industry as a whole and establish itself as 'the source' for dimension stone slates and slate roofing information," according to Bill Marcum of Martech Associates, primary organizer of the event. The gathering was conducted in an informal setting "in an effort to collect thoughts and gather input into the formation of a formal association that would represent the many needs in the dimension stone slate and slate roofing industry in the new millennium," said Marcum.

The one day event was attended by Bill Marcum; Nancy Turner of US Quarried Slate, Fair Haven, VT; John Conlin of Hilltop Slate, Granville, NY; Jim Gibbs, Pat Rudder, and Jim

Constantine, all of Cornell University; Doug Cochran of Durable Slate, Columbus, Ohio; Dave Leeland of Leeland Slate Roofing, Lititz, PA; John Meyer of Vermont Slate and Copper; John Hill of Greenstone Slate, Poultney, VT; Steve Taran of Taran Bros., Inc., Vermont; Pete Tatko of Sheldon Slate Products; Norman Farrell of Pennsylvania; Stuart Matthews of Northern Roof Tile, Blasdel, NY; Matt Millen of Millen Roofing, Milwaukee; Richard Boyle of Evergreen Slate, Granville, NY; Shawn and Dave Camara of Camara Slate, Fair Haven, VT; Craig Markow of Vermont Structural Slate, Fair Haven, VT; Chuck Smid and Clay Heald of New England Slate, Sudbury, VT; Pete Papay of Penn Big Bed Slate, Slatington, PA; Ken Lerch of Structural Slate Co., Pen Argyl, PA; and myself, Joseph Jenkins of Jenkins Slate Roofing Services, Grove City, PA.

The meeting consisted of a presentation by Marcum, punctuated by questions and discussion among the group. Marcum asserted a need for consistent information in the general slate industry—the need for a singular authoritative source of information, explaining that this meeting represented a "wide open opportunity/invitation" and the group was encouraged to tell others about it. Marcum further asserted that he believed a slate association was desperately needed for two basic reasons:

1) To create "standardization" among the industry. This would include, for example, standards regarding hole punching in slate, as well as standardized industry terms to replace or clarify ambiguous ones such as "weathering" and "fading." An association would further aid in the distribution of this standardized information.

2) To establish installation or application methods for roof slate that are universally accepted.

ASTM testing of slate was discussed at some length. Many expressed frustration at the ASTM testing procedures, which were said to be inconsistent and unreliable, or "inaccurate and wrought with errors," as Hill stated, adding that "you can cut four pieces of slate from the same slate, send it to four testing companies, and get four different results." It was suggested that perhaps only three testing labs that are proven to be reliable could be used by all, and that the testing procedures need to be advanced. Again, the assertion was made that an association is needed to change the current testing system. Or, as Marcum put it, "It's time for a change. Let's do it!"

Estimated costs to get such an organization off the ground ranged from a pay-as-you-go approach suggested by Shawn Camara, to \$25,000.00 for the first year estimated by Marcum, to \$100,000 or more in annual operating costs suggested by Millen, who is affiliated with the National Roofing Contractors Association and aware of its multi-million dollar budget. Marcum also suggested that the publication known as the "Slate Roof Quarterly," now edited by Dave Leeland, could easily become the official magazine of the association.

Although no concrete decisions were made by meeting's end, and no conclusions were arrived at, it seemed to be the general consensus of the group that the formation of a slate industry association should be further considered. No additional meeting dates were set, although several people agreed to meet at a time of their own discretion, in one of three groups, for further discussion.

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## READERS WRITE

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Spain, including from the Galicia and Leon regions, and from other foreign sources as well (look for an article on Spanish slate in a future TR). Take your time and shop around — your slate roof should last at least a century if the right slate is used and it's properly installed, so why rush into it? Buyer beware. ☒



## ROUNDTABLE

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These groups were: 1) manufacturers (quarriers), 2) roofing contractors, and 3) owner/designers. Group one included John Conlin, John Hill, and Shawn Camara. Group two included Doug Cochran, Dave Leeland, Matt Millen, and Joe Jenkins. Group three included Bill Marcum, Pat Rudder, and Jim Constantine.

At the time of this writing, there were no additional developments to report. ☒

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