

THIS ISSUE'S INDUSTRY SPOTLIGHT:

CAMARA AND SONS SLATE COMPANY

The "Slate Valley" of western Vermont is well-known world wide for its high quality, multi-colored roofing slates—some of the best slates in the world come from here. Stretching for 25 miles from north to south, the valley is dotted by numerous quarries of stone that glistens purple, red, green, gray, or black; stone that has been historically proven to withstand the test of time on the roofs of buildings. Many rugged men work these quarries, wrestling from the Earth the massive stone slabs that will be skillfully worked by hand into individual roofing shingles.

Dave Camara is one of those workers. President and founder of Camara Slate, Inc., Dave and four of his sons now operate three working quarries spread throughout the valley. Camara Slate also owns an additional dozen or so area quarries for possible future development.

Dave started in the business in the early 80s by salvaging slates from old buildings, trucking the salvaged slates around the nation, and backhauling steel building components. His slate salvaging business expanded rapidly, allowing, from year to year, the purchase of bigger trucks and more slates, and finally his first slate quarry. Truly a tale of hard work, determination, and ingenuity, Dave Camara, with the help of his family, has risen to the top of the field in the slate roofing manufacturing business. Camara Slate now offers for sale new slates of a rainbow of colors: gray, unfading red, Spanish black, unfading green, unfading mottled purple, "sea green," purple, and Vermont gray black. They also produce slate flooring, flagstones, cladding, sills and copings, treads and risers, countertops, and structural slate in a variety of colors. Pallets of salvaged slates can still be found in the Camara stockyard on Route 22A just outside Fair Haven, although these are now dwarfed by the extensive inventory of new slates that fill the yard.

Camara and his sons express a strong pride in their products; their attention to detail and concern for quality and reputation is remarkable. Shawn Camara (age 30) runs the Blissville Quarry at the northern end of the valley, working alongside the other men there, splitting slates and keeping an eye on quality control. Here they produce the unfading slates: mottled green and purple, unfading gray and unfading green. Dave Camara, Jr., (age 33) works in the pit at the Blissville quarry—an experienced "rockman," responsible for selecting the high-quality stone that is needed for splitting into roofing shingles.

Mike Camara (age 32) runs the West Pawlet quarry at the southern end of the valley, while Danny (age 26) is the rockman there. Here they produce Vermont black slates, semi-weathering gray, and semi-weathering green slates. From their Wells quarry, in the center of the valley, also come sea green and semi-weathering gray slates.

Camara slates are shipped throughout the United States including Hawaii, as well as to Canada. Their roofing slates have the traditional punched nail holes as opposed to non-countersunk drilled holes that are found on lower quality slates. The holes are punched to allow for either a three-inch or four-inch headlap. Camara's slate prices are very competitive; their product quality appears to be quite high; their attention to detail and concern for customer satisfaction are genuine, and they offer information that is no-nonsense and straightforward. As a result, Camara Slate is gaining an impressive reputation among roofing contractors in the United States. They're certainly worth a look when considering the purchase of virtually any slate product. ☐



Dave Camara and a supply of "sea green" roofing slates awaiting shipment at the Camara Slate Co., Inc. stockyard on Rt 22A just outside Fair Haven, Vermont.



Shawn Camara, Vermont's most eligible bachelor, splitting a slate block into roofing slates at the Blissville Quarry.