



SLATE ROOFING CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION (SLATEROOFERS.ORG)

by Joe Jenkins

A national organization dedicated to *slate roofing* contractors is way overdue. Yes, we already have the National Roofing Contractors Association (NRCA). But it is an organization that has about zero interest in the issues that are important to traditional slate roofing professionals. Plus, it has a strongly conservative political leaning that some find distasteful, and its monthly magazine reads like a who's who of the chemical industry. Besides, we have enough trade organizations devoted to golfing.

What we need is a *slate roofing* trade organization devoted to education, networking, hands-on training, and the establishment and maintenance of contractor and material standards. We need an organization that will separate the roofers who are serious about slate from the pretenders. We need to be able to direct the public to screened, experienced, professional and ethical slate roofing contractors. We slate roofing professionals need to be able to communicate online and by phone to help each other out when we're faced with difficult roofing scenarios. We need the Slate Roofing Contractors Association (SRCA), a national association that would include all of North America.

I have been kicking this idea around for years and have posted information about it on our online message board at jenkinsslate.com. However, nothing has come to fruition until now. Because we publish the Slate Roof Bible and the Traditional Roofing newsletter, a lot of traffic goes through our web site at jenkinsslate.com. I get a lot of inquiries from homeowners, roof owners, architects, contractors and the like looking for competent roofing contractors who can either install a new slate roof, replace an existing slate roof with a new slate roof, or restore an existing slate roof. I also get a lot of feedback from people who have had very bad experiences with roofers who don't have a clue about how to work with a slate roof. The time has come to establish a serious association of slate roofing contractors. The association would:

1) Have a multi-tiered membership that would include:

a) fully qualified slate roofing contractors (for example, 75% of income derived from slate roofing contracting projects and minimum 5 years experience with no ethical misconduct on record)

b) other roofing contractors, technicians, mechanics, apprentices, etc. who do not qualify for the membership

category above (but may do so in the future)

c) non-contractor industry professionals such as slate quarry personnel, slate brokers, slate tool manufacturers, etc.

d) other professionals such as architects, conservators, roofing consultants, and preservation specialists

e) general members (slate roof owners, general public)

2) Develop training programs with the intention of eventually establishing certification programs (slate roof installation training, slate roof repair training, slate roof restoration training, etc.).

3) Interface with other related national and regional organizations such as the National Slate Association, NRCA, Preservation Trades Network, Craftsmans' Guilds, etc.

4) Establish exchange programs with overseas roofing schools (we are already talking with Telford College in Scotland about this, and have had keen interest shown by the German schools).

5) Maintain a web presence that will:

a) list qualified slate roofing professionals, including contact information, photos of work completed, etc. This would be a professional directory open to the public, a source list of qualified slaters to where inquiring people can be directed.

b) Provide an informative web page for each full member contractor, including email accounts (yourname@slateroofers.org).

c) maintain a public message board where anybody can post questions and answers (such as we now have at jenkinsslate.com)

d) maintain a members only message board where issues such as costs, techniques, contracting issues, materials, estimating jobs, etc. can be discussed among members.

6) Hold an annual conference where members exchange information, techniques, and trade secrets; where we help each other to advance our skills; where we get our hands dirty; and where we make new friends and have fun in a cost efficient manner.

7) Publish a newsletter, perhaps Traditional Roofing.

This will not be a free or frivolous organization; it will be a trade organization that will require a serious commitment, including the payment of annual dues. We will be developing the details of this organization during the winter months of 2003/2004 and will be creating a member base shortly thereafter. We have no ambitions of creating a huge organization such as the 5,000 member NRCA. If there are only twenty of us to start, that's twenty more than we have now. The web domain (slateroofers.org) is already secured and a rudimentary website is awaiting further development. If you want to get in on the ground floor, email me at joe@josephjenkins.com, call us toll free at 1-866-641-7141, or write to Joseph Jenkins, Inc, 143 Forest Lane, Grove City, PA 16127. Get your name on the potential membership list and let us know if you want to help with the organizational development process as well! ☐