

# Advice from Experience

Ross A. Gibson

As a third generation master carpenter, I have learned many tricks of the trade. Some techniques were passed down from my father and grandfather. Others I learned from my own trial and errors. While recently celebrating my 55th birthday, I reminisced about the 40 years I have spent in construction. I would like to share with you one of the tricks I believe is a good idea.

I was 17 years old when my father told me to paint the valley of a very steep slate roof. It didn't take long to realize that I needed three hands to complete this task. I needed one hand for the paint brush, one hand for the paint bucket and one hand to hold on for dear life. My father believed in the school of hard knocks, so he let me climb the valley with two hands when I needed three. I made a mess.

Today I get a sturdy plastic jug with a handle, then drill a 3/16 hole in the top. I tie one end of a two foot string to the handle and the other end to my belt. Now I can climb with two hands, squirt the valley paint where I want with no fuss, no muss. At the end of the job, I insert a roofing nail in the hole then turn it upside down for a few seconds to seal it for the next valley or chimney flash. My father would be proud.



Photos supplied by Ross Gibson

## WEB SITE DEVOTED TO CANCER PREVENTION

I am creating a web site devoted to cancer prevention for roofers working with modified bitumen and EPDM membranes. For more information about possible health effects from exposure to asphalt and about the selection of appropriate respiratory protection, see the following publications: NIOSH [1987]. NIOSH respirator decision logic. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Centers for Disease Control, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 87-108; NIOSH [1996]. NIOSH guide to the selection and use of particulate respirators certified under 42 CFR 84. Cincinnati, OH: U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 96-101; NIOSH [2000]. Health effects of occupational exposure to asphalt. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Public Health Service, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, DHHS (NIOSH) Publication No. 2001-110. Here is where I will be storing the results of my research: [www.milwaukee.renaissance.com/DailyAgoraAnnouncements/HomePage](http://www.milwaukee.renaissance.com/DailyAgoraAnnouncements/HomePage). James J. Godsil, President — Community Roofing & Restoration, Inc.

## MYSTERIOUS STAINS Joseph Jenkins

We have received photos in the past year of two slate roofs in the southern U.S. that have developed large splotches of mysterious black stains. There have been a number of theories as to the origin of the stains, such as mold or other types of growth, felt paper or some type of underlayment deterioration, but the true cause of the stains has yet to be determined.

Pat Bryan, of Knoxville, Tennessee, for example, wrote, "Over the past 10 years, a black substance has been spreading on my 20-year-old, north-facing slate roof. It doesn't scrape off. I tried spraying a test patch with a 50% chlorine solution, but no change."

My response to Pat was, "What strikes me as odd about the stains is that none of them appear to originate in the center of a slate. If they were caused by a mold or fungus, you would think they would exist right in the center of a slate somewhere. Can you check to see whether the installers placed felt paper between every course of slate? I have seen this done. It's a mistake. It's possible that a low grade of asphalt from the felt paper is leaching onto your roof. Perhaps the leachate is feeding some strain of mildew."

Pat discovered a solution to the problem. "I just thought I'd let you know that, while I didn't determine the cause of it, I did find a good method to get rid of it — at least temporarily. Chemicals (chlorine, copper) didn't seem to have any affect, so I pressure-washed it off using a 24' extension pole and a 12.5" wall washer from Northern (Model WW320t). This wall/roof washing attachment has a brush edge and two rotating nozzles. The unit virtually floated over the slate, and the nozzles weren't aggressive enough to damage the roof." The before and after photos are shown at right.

Pat later informed me that, "FYI, while I was repairing some slate tiles yesterday, I noticed that there IS felt paper between the courses. I had previously said there wasn't because I couldn't see any from the roof edges. Perhaps this is contributing to the black growth on the north faces."

I wonder if the felt is somehow creating the problem. Felt is typically only installed underneath slates, not in between courses, but sometimes a roofer will install it that way because he doesn't really know what he's doing. The black growth the roof is exhibiting is very unusual, which is why I suspect some deviation from standard installation practices that may be at the root of the problem. In any case, I'm glad Pat found a solution.

Any readers have any experience with anything like this? If so, let us know: [editor@traditionalroofing.com](mailto:editor@traditionalroofing.com).



Photos by Pat Bryan



Photos supplied by Martin Bungartz

## SLATE ART

Martin Bungartz (left), SRCA member and German immigrant living in Florida, shows off some of the highly skilled "slate art" for which the Germans are famous. He can be contacted at Technical Management, Inc., 11233 60th Avenue N, Seminole, FL 33772; Ph/Fax: 727-392-0860; email: [m.bungartz@gmx.net](mailto:m.bungartz@gmx.net)

# Real Vermont Roofing Slate

Susan Wonderly

NEWMONT SLATE CO., INC., the largest quarry and producer of roofing slates in the United States, opened a direct sales division, Real Vermont Roofing Slate, last spring and on the 19th of this month launched its first website. Prior to 2007, Jack Williams, President and CEO of Newmont, sold his roofing slates exclusively to distributors for 43 years. As a result, although its roofing slate tops thousands of institutional and residential buildings across the United States, this



Vermont based company is virtually unknown to roofing contractors, architects, and owners. Determined to publicly connect Newmont Slate to its superior products, including its vastly popular Vermont Black roofing slate, Williams has begun an all-out advertising campaign.

Newmont Slate is focusing on three distinctive markets: institutional, residential, and log and timber frame homes, and other areas of specialty application. Researching many aspects of geographical locations prone to fires such as California, Colorado and New Mexico, Newmont will market its roofing slate as an aid in fire prevention because slate qualifies as a non-combustible building material.

Additionally, Newmont is taking steps to obtain green certification for its slate product. Ed Mazria AIA, a real veteran of green design, recently told a Newmont staff member that he thought its hand-split roofing slate would be a natural for green certification. Mazria said, "As far as I know, roofing slate is produced with a low energy quotient, it will last for 100 or more years, and it's recyclable." Those words of encouragement from an architect of international authority inspired some of the new directions Newmont is taking.

When asked about the [new for Newmont] direct marketing, Williams says, "We have a responsibility to remain flexible, to go with the flow, and to do the right thing. It's how we respond to changing conditions that makes a difference. Besides which, gone are the days when distributors would place orders on Mondays, pick them up on Fridays, and pay on Tuesdays. Changing times are challenging, but we're learning a whole lot more that we didn't know before. Plus, there is something ultimately gratifying about seeing a photograph of a beautiful building with our product on it. Before, we didn't have the opportunity to connect with our end users. We never knew to whom our roofing slate was sold. In the end, it's all worth it. The service aspect of this business hasn't changed, however. It's always been the backbone of our business, and always will be. We're just beginning to connect with architects, roofing contractors, and owners — and that's a good thing."

Behind Newmont Slate's heretofore quiet success is the ability to produce a minimum of fifty thousand square feet per week and maintain quarries of large acreage with ample deposits of good quality stone.

Equally, Williams stores orders at the quarry at no additional charge until they are needed on the construction site. This policy is particularly attractive to construction sites faced with limited storage or contractors who simply wish to diminish work-site vandalism or theft. Williams accommodates all architectural specifications regardless of the widths, lengths or thickness of slates from thins to heavies in a variety of colors. The standard colors of Newmont's slate are Vermont Black, Vermont Strata Grey and Vermont Hazy Green. Their new website is [www.realvermontroofingslate.com](http://www.realvermontroofingslate.com)

## STANDARD PRACTICES FOR STAINLESS STEEL Roofing, Flashing, Copings

This 13 page "designer handbook," which can be downloaded on the internet as a PDF file, contains useful information about using stainless steel as a roofing material. The contents include: Properties of Stainless Steel, Standard Practices, How to Select Stainless Steel, General Shop Practices, Joining, Installation Practices, Standing Seam Roofing, Copings, Expansion Joints, and several other chapters. Available from the Specialty Steel Industry of North America, 3050 K Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20007; phone: 800-982-0355; and on the web at [www.ssina.com](http://www.ssina.com). Excerpt: "Properties of Stainless Steel: Stainless steel is

perhaps best-known for its aesthetic value and long life. For most roofing and flashing applications, however, functional properties and economic factors are also important. Stainless steel for such applications offers significant performance advantages to the architect and building owner:

- Stainless steel is corrosion resistant all the way through and requires no artificially applied surface coating for protection.
- Stainless steel is self-cleaning and requires little or no maintenance and is often the most economical material when total life cycle costing is considered.... [etc.]"

	EXPANSION IN 64ths OF AN INCH PER 100° F TEMPERATURE RISE PER 10' LENGTH (APPROX.)												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
STAINLESS	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
SOFT COPPER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
C.R. COPPER	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
TIN	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
ALUMINUM	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
LEAD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
ZINC	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13

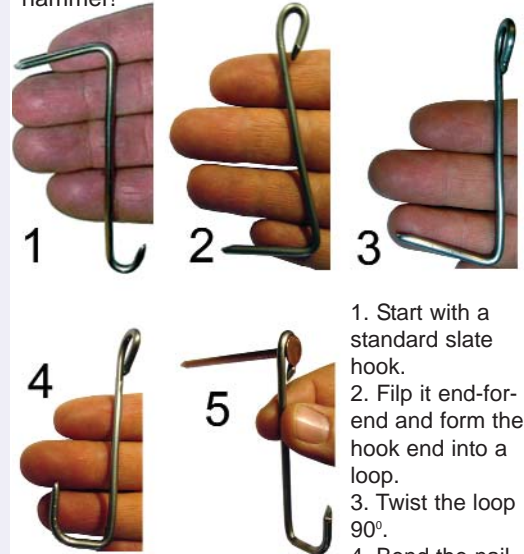
## And the Winner is...



James Warden engaged in volunteer slate repair in New Orleans' Katrina-ravaged Lower Ninth Ward.

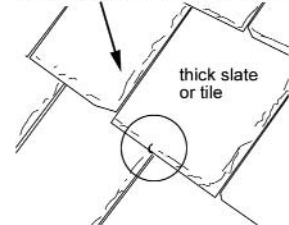
Photo by Joseph Jenkins

Winner of our **best tip award** this issue is SRCA member James Warden of Milligan Construction in Providence, RI. If you're on a roof with thicker slates or even tiles and a standard slate hook isn't big enough, just flip it over, close the hook end into a loop, nail it through the loop and bend the longer end up to make an oversized hook. Pretty slick. James gets a free Gilbert and Becker slate hammer!



1. Start with a standard slate hook.
2. Flip it end-for-end and form the hook end into a loop.
3. Twist the loop 90°.
4. Bend the nailing end into a hook shape.
5. Use a nail through the new loop to attach the slate hook to the roof. Now you have an oversized hook that can be used on thick slates or tiles!

### SLATE HOOK REPAIR



Have a great roofing tip?

Email it to: [editor@traditionalroofing.com](mailto:editor@traditionalroofing.com) or mail it to us! You could be the next winner of a traditional slater's hammer worth \$100.00!

