

Buckingham is Back!

BUCKINGHAM SLATE COMPANY RAMPS UP PRODUCTION

The 143 year old Buckingham Slate Company in Arvon, Virginia (Buckingham County) was purchased by a new partnership in late 2008. Mark Claud is now president of Buckingham Slate Co. He teamed up with Sam Berger of S.F. Berger Inc. and Brad Jones of Colonial Masonry Inc. to purchase the company.

Claud has worked in the real estate business for more than two decades, while Berger's family has been in the roofing business for 60 years. Jones, an engineer, has 30 years of experience in construction and masonry. The three men viewed the acquisition as a good business investment in one of the finest slate deposits in the world. They bought the company from Richard Rose Jr., who had operated it for about 15 years, and they've spent more than a year and a half working to revitalize the business.

Since acquiring Buckingham Slate, the owners have built substantial inventory, redeveloped the quarry, dramatically reduced lead times, and invested in modernizing operations. They've upgraded equipment and invested in marketing the roofing, windowsills, tabletops, flooring, structural stone, flagstone, crushed stone and countertops that they produce. Despite the difficult economy, the company realized a 96% growth in roofing sales over the previous year and credits much of the success on a renewed emphasis on customer service, quality control, and marketing efforts. The quality of the unfading blue-black slate that is quarried by the company has never wavered.

Buckingham slate is considered by many to be of the very

highest quality roofing slate available in the U.S. (an entire chapter in the Slate Roof Bible is devoted to this slate). The company has worked diligently to restore the Buckingham Slate name to its rightful place in the slate and stone industry. It's currently in the process of building a new state of the art saw house while it continues to make customer satisfaction its ultimate priority. Buckingham Slate's production efficiency has improved greatly and is now producing more slate with fewer people. The company has about 60 employees, down from a peak of about a hundred, although they still have many workers who have been there for 40 years or more, ensuring a skilled work force.

Buckingham Slate operates two slate quarries — including one near the company's offices that is 350 feet deep. Claud estimates there is enough slate on the company's 500-acre property to last several hundred years. As the business traces its roots back to 1867, that's a lot of slate! In the 19th century, Geologist W. B. Rogers reported to the Virginia Legislature that, "In texture, density and capacity of resisting atmospheric agents, Buckingham County slate can scarcely be excelled by a similar material in any part of the world." He further recorded the use of

Buckingham Slate, still serviceable today, on the University of Virginia, specified by Thomas Jefferson for roof covering.

The Buckingham Slate Company is the only quarry and manufacturer of slate in Virginia, and the only source of true Buckingham® Slate. 

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Tony Chambers (above), has been with the company for many years.



Photos provided by Buckingham Slate Co., LLC