

BY JEFFREY S. LEVINE

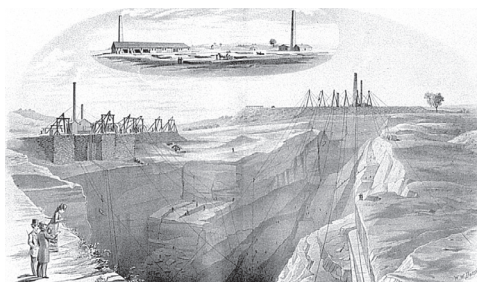
Wiss, Janney, Elstner Associates, Inc.

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Pennsylvania Hard-Vein Slate

The slate belt of Pennsylvania consists of two types of slate known as “hard-vein” and “soft-vein.” The lower hard-vein belt, also known as Chapman Slate, occurs furthest south, passing through Edelman, Belfast, and Chapman Quarries in Northampton County.

Chapman Quarries, Pennsylvania, derives its name from William Chapman, a Welsh quarry worker who came to America in 1842 and opened the Chapman Slate Company in 1850. In 1866, The Honorable Richard Chapman (photo below), William’s half-brother, became superintendent of the quarry.



Data accompanying the quaint c.1875 print shown above indicates the large extent of the quarry: 700 feet long, 300 feet wide, and 225 feet deep.

Pennsylvania hard-vein slate is blue-black in color when freshly quarried. Its cleavage surface, or face, is marked by closely spaced, light and dark colored ribbons that give the slate a streaked appearance. Today, this can

best be seen on vertical walls, where the slate is somewhat protected from the weather (photo below).



After some years of exposure, hard-vein slate used for roofing purposes takes on a more pronounced streaked appearance as the ribbons become more prominent and can be seen to be oriented at various, random angles across the face of the slate (see photo below).



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Pennsylvania Hard-Vein Slate (CONTINUED)

In some environments, weathered slates can take on a light orange hue. Wall cladding slates sometimes turn a matte green color.

Pennsylvania hard-vein slate has an expected service life of about one hundred years. Its production ceased in the mid- to late 1950s. Limited amounts of salvaged hard-vein slate are available today through distributors, primarily for use in repair work.

For those seeking to replace an entire roof with matching material, there are few options. No slate currently on the market matches the unique character of Pennsylvania hard-vein slate. The closest resemblance comes from a Vermont slate known as Strata Gray. Strata Gray is characterized by an overall grayish background with mottling in various shades of darker gray and black (photo below). It can also display some weathering, whereby the slates can take on subtle shades of buff, brown, tan, and orange over time.



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