

Slate Quarries in Lynn Township (1844-1927)

By: Edgar W. Kern



Lieberman Quarry & Factory,

1890 Blackboard slate was the main product. Was located at present day (1990) intersection of Dresher Road and Slateville Road (NE of intersection).

One of the most enterprising industries of Lynn Township was the slate industry.

The first slate quarry was opened by Daniel Jones, James Porter and Robert McDowell in 1844. These three men also had quarries at Slatington (formerly called Waverly). They operated a quarry at Lynnport under the name “Excelsior Slate Works” and was one of 26 quarries that operated in the township during the period from 1844 to 1927. The Pennsylvania Geological Survey Fourth Series Bulletin prepared by Charles Behre, Jr. in 1933 for the Department of Internal Affairs, classified the 26 quarries as the “Lynnport Group”. We will elaborate on the location and other data later in this article.

Two quarries were opened during the 1850's, one near the Excelsior, called the South Shenton Quarry and the other near the summit of a hill east of Lynnport on the northeasterly side of Route 143 near Quarry Road. A Scotchman, Anthony Donnan, who was also an operator of a quarry at Slatington was born at Newton Stewart, Scotland, February 28, 1829 and immigrated to America in 1852, was the founder. He died in 1872. In 1860 he began a factory at Lynnport for the making of “mantels” by a graining process. These were decorative slate facings for fireplaces and other building purposes that enjoyed great popularity during the heyday or Victorian architecture. Many parlors of the period

were so decorated. A few can still be found around Lynnport and the general area. Other products manufactured in addition to roofing slate were sink tops, register slabs, toilet slabs and electrical slabs and blocks. However as less expensive substitutes replaced the slate, activities fell off and by 1920 less than 10 men were employed. The quarries were shutdown completely in 1927. The only evidence of this important industry are the culm heaps with their water filled quarries beside them.

Working Schedule and Labor Rates

The men (and they were all men) on the payroll lived on farms in the general area and except for a very few who used a carriage and horse, walked back and forth to work. The work was hard and in most cases, somewhat wet. It was more than normally hazardous work and the men who work in the quarry were exposed to falling rocks and slides and all who handled the slates were exposed to heavy materials with jagged, sharp edges.

The hours worked in summer amounted to 11 hours each day and 6 hours on Saturdays. The total averaged about 260 hours per month per man. In winter the hours were reduced to 9 hours per day and 5 hours on Saturday which averaged less than 200 hours per month because of bad weather.

In 1893 the average wage was \$.18 an hour. Workers started at \$.12 an hour and the highest wages were \$.25 an hour for skilled workers. Farmers with horses were sometimes contracted for a specific job and were called "Teamsters".

Locations

Quarries were located in three general areas at Lynnport, Mosserville and Slateville. They were all part of the Lynnport Group.

Starting with the eight quarries in the Lynnport area:

Henry Quarry

This large opening is on the west side of Lynnport about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north of Wanamakers near the Ontelaunee Creek. Its dimensions were 330 ft. by 135 ft. and the slate had excellent cleavage.

About $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile and slightly northward from the Henry Quarry on the road to the Blue Mountain. The quarry was on the land of Thomas Hermany and was last worked in 1884. Two quarries were at this location.



Script money used by the Hess Quarry in the 1870s.

North Hermany Quarry

This quarry was located 200 feet north of the South Hermany Quarry.

A quarry was located $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile north of the church at Jacksonville on the same tributary as the North Hermany quarry.

South Shenton Quarry

Half a mile north of Lynnport on headwaters of Ontelaunee Creek are four openings. The south most is on the east bank of the stream, whereas the other 3 are in the stream on the west bank.

Shenton Quarry

There are three openings near the Theron Jones Farm.

Script Money

Hess (Ontelaunee)Quarry

Located a quarter of a mile east of Lynnport and 700 feet north of Route 143 then called the Lynnport/Slatington highway. Slate from this quarry was used to supply the mill at Hess/Ontelaunee in Lynnport. The quarry was 290 by 200 feet in plan and contained marbled slate. The quarry started operations previous to 1880 and continued operations until 1927.

Kuntz Quarry

This quarry was located one mile east of Lynnport and 300 feet north on Quarry Road on the Clark Hamm property. The opening was 70 by 155 feet in area. According to Irwin Hamm the quarry is 75 feet deep and when the quarry was abandoned the equipment was left in the floor of the quarry because it was too expensive to move. Irwin reported that his uncle John Hamm lost his right hand in a quarry accident. It was owned and first operated by Erwin Brobst and later by the Slatington Slate Co. It was abandoned in 1917.

There were 5 quarries in the Mosserville area.

Bauer Quarry

Approximately 1-1/2 miles west of Mosserville and an equal distance northeast of Lynnport on the headwaters of a tributary to Ontelaunee Creek. The opening is 90 by 200 feet and about 40 feet deep in size. Four beds are seen here and were last worked in 1915 along Fort Everett Road.

Laurel Hill Quarry

This is situated half a mile southwest of the Bauer Quarry. A large opening 180 feet square exists. This quarry was in operation as early as 1880.

Mosserville Quarries

These two openings lie respectively a quarter and four-tenth of a mile south of Mosserville and west of the road to New Tripoli. The last operations were about 1900.

Sieger and Kraus Quarry

This is on the east side of the road opposite the Mosserville quarry just described. It is a hole 150 feet square and 90 feet deep. The quarry was last worked in 1895.

Old Quarry

About a mile north of Mosserville. It is in part of a cut into the hillside in the east bank of the headwater of Ontelaunee Creek. The quarry has been long deserted.

Slate sink top

Slate sink top in kitchen of

Roger Wanamaker of Lenhartsville.

There are 13 quarries in the Slateville/Quaker City area.

Hemerly Quarry

Located 0.7 mile west of Quaker City. Nothing is known of it's quarry history.

Mammoth Quarry

This opening is situated 600 feet east of the Hemerly Quarry. Operations started in 1866.

Oswald Quarry

This pit is 200 feet east of the Mammoth Quarry. It is very small and shallow that solid slate was not encountered in all probability.

Quaker City Quarries

Three openings lie west of a secondary that leads northwest from the road at Quaker City.

East of Quaker City Quarries

Immediately across the road is an opening 225 feet by 100 feet showing 7 feet of slate above the water.

Centennial Quarry

Located 300 feet north of the quarry mentioned in item 18; measuring 80x300 feet. This quarry was opened in 1850 and last operated in 1905. Roofing slate was the only product.

Pittsburg Quarry

Located 900 feet east of the Centennial Quarry. It is 200 feet by 50 feet and is estimated to have had 20 feet of slate and is at the head of a small tributary to Ontelaunee Creek.

Daniels Quarry

This is half a mile west of Slateville and had three openings. It was a large quarry measuring 275 feet by 140 feet in ground plan and was 125 feet deep. The quarry opened in 1872 and last ran in 1905 by a Reading firm.

This quarry lies 100 feet east of the Daniels quarry on the road leading northwest from Slateville. Its size is 250 ft. by 120 feet and 30 feet of slate show above the water. The quarry closed in 1917 and first operated by Irwin Brobst and later by the Slatington Slate Company.

Kalback Quarry

This is east of Quarry 22 and also east of the road that leads northwest from Slateville. This quarry was 200 feet by 20 feet in size. The quarry was opened by William Roberts about 1860 and shutdown in 1880.

Roberts Quarry

This quarry is situated about 800 feet east of the Kalback Quarry. The quarry is about 90 feet square and was opened in 1895 by William Roberts and was closed in 1901.

North Kistler Quarry

This is the northern of two openings located a half mile east of Slateville on east side of road to the Blue Mountain. It is only 50 feet by 30 feet in size.

South Kistler Quarry

It is located south of the North Kistler quarry, due east of old Kistler farm house. It is 20x40 feet in size.

Editor's Note: Helping to locate and assemble this information was Marlin Metzger who was of invaluable service to this article.