

# Butler Eagle

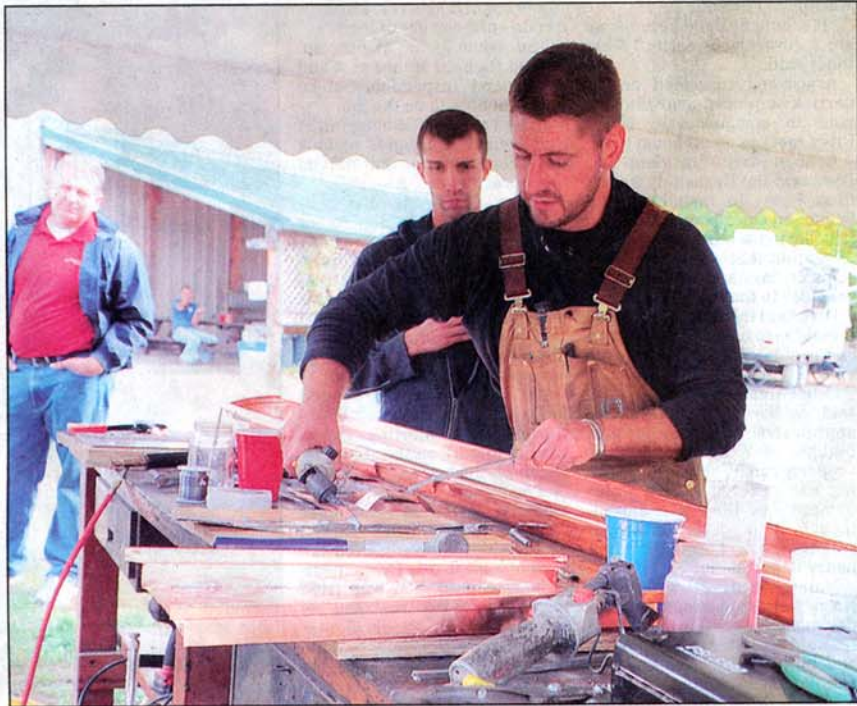
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## SPOTLIGHT NORTH

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### SHOWING HOW



Contractor Chris Paulin of Akron, Ohio, demonstrates a soldering technique Saturday for building gutters and roof trim at the Slate Roofing Contractors Association

national conference in Barkeyville. Joe Jenkins of Barkeyville is the group's founder.

DAVE PRELOSKY/BUTLER EAGLE

# Slate roof group conducts conference in Barkeyville

By John Bojarski  
Eagle Staff Writer

BARKEYVILLE, Venango County — To most people, the roof over their head is just that: a functional canopy.

But, for the more than 80 people who attended the Slate Roofing Contractors Association of North America's national conference last weekend, a roof can be something more.

"It's the craft," said Chuck Wagner, president of Wagner Roofing in Washington, D.C.

He said that he appreciates the "architectural beauty" of slate, which can make a roof both functional and a work of art.

The conference was held on Joe Jenkins' property in a heavily wooded area of Barkeyville. He is the president of Joseph Jenkins Inc. and the executive director of the SRCA.

Jenkins founded the SRCA in 2005. Today, it has 88 members. He said he decided to found it to be able to provide slate roofers with representation in the roofing industry, including providing training programs and instructions.

"Those of us in the trade were not represented," Jenkins said. "It's a niche field."

The first conference was held on Jenkins' property in 2008. This was the first

one to be held there since that one.

The conference, held Friday to Sunday, included workshops and demonstrations on both new and traditional slate roofing techniques. It also included catered meals and entertainment for the people who attended.

"We are able to demonstrate skills that are rarely seen," Jenkins said.

Jenkins first became interested in slate roofing in 1968 when he was attending Butler High School. He was working on a house on Hansen Avenue in Lyndora for contractor Peter Odrey.

"When I climbed onto my first slate roof and I sat on the ridge and I looked down, I told myself that if I ever built a house, this is the kind of roof I'd put on it," Jenkins said.

He said he loves slate roofs because of their look, versatility and longevity.

A slate roof can last well over 100 years, whereas the more common asphalt shingle roof lasts between 20 and 35 years. Additionally, a slate roof can be constructed out of multiple types of slate and both new and old slate, while a shingle roof has to be constructed out of one type of shingle.

On Jenkins' property, most of the nonbusiness related buildings, right down to the lake house, have a

slate roof.

This type of enthusiasm was matched by the contractors who attended.

Alden Gibbs, U.S. representative for SSG Slate, which is based in England, said that the peak of the industry was in 1902. It took a steep dive after that. However, there was an uptake in the industry in the 1970s, which continues today.

He said the conference is a testament to that uptake.

"The slate industry is alive and well," Gibbs said.

Bob Williams, owner of the Newmont Slate Co. in Vermont, said that one of the things that attracts him to slate roofs is how "green" they are, being natural and lasting a long time.

"It's ecologically sound," Williams said.

His son, Riley Williams, is 12 years old. He began working in the family business when he was 9. He said that he was "born into it," and is interested in continuing the family business when he gets older.

"That slate looks good on roofs," he said.

Not everyone who attended the conference was a slate roofer by trade.

Dean Bredenbeck of Cleveland, Ohio, is just a homeowner who appreciates a good slate roof.

He first became interested in slate roofs when he read Jenkins' book, "The Slate Roof Bible," several years ago. The book inspired him so much that he was going to build a barn and put a slate roof on top of it.

He said he likes the longevity of slate.

"It's the kind of construction that will outlive you," Bredenbeck said.