Slate Valley Driving Tour

A self-guided driving tour of sites related to the slate industry

Celebrating the heritage of the Slate Valley

17 Water Street, Granville, NY 12832
(518) 642-1417
WWW.SLATEVALLEYMUSEUM.ORG
Driving Tour Instructions

Instructions are included throughout this booklet, along with maps to guide you through each area. The numbers on the maps correspond to the written descriptions of several points of interest.

The tour takes approximately two hours and covers 45 miles.

The tour is a complete loop that will bring you back to Granville, N.Y., after covering the entire heart of the Slate Valley. There are several places along the way to stop for gas and meals, and plenty of places to picnic.

Important Notes Before You Go

Please keep in mind that many of the sites on the tour are on private property. Please view them from the road. Quarries are dangerous and unstable. Do not enter the sites or climb on the slate piles.

If you are interested in touring the West Castleton Railroad and Slate Company Historic Site at Lake Bomoseen, please pick up a *Slate History Trail* brochure at the museum before departing. These brochures are also available at Lake Bomoseen State Park, which is an excellent place to stop for a picnic lunch.

Slate has been used for many purposes in the Slate Valley over the past 160 years. Slate roofs, foundations, sidewalks, wall cladding, sculpings, and landscaping are visible throughout the entire tour, but only a few examples are noted in this booklet.

*If you are interested in seeing the many applications of slate up close, consider taking the Slate Valley Museum walking tours of Granville, NY, and Poultney, VT. These brochures are available at the museum.*
1. Slate Valley Museum - Begin at the museum. Notice several uses of slate in the construction of the museum, including a decorative roof, windowsills and lintels, and landscaping. Proceed straight out of the driveway onto Water St. At the end of Water St., turn left onto Church St. At Main St., turn right and immediately left onto North St. When the road forks, stay to the right, continuing up Pine Street (County Route 25).

As you drive through Granville, notice that the majority of homes have slate roofs. Also notice the predominant color of the slate roofs here. The semi-weathering slates, which are common in Granville and the south end of the Slate Valley, develop a rusty patina and an aged look very quickly. You will also notice several interesting slate applications throughout town, including fences, cladding, and sculpting (hand carved slate bricks).

2. Abandoned Quarry - Approximately one mile after leaving the museum on the left is an abandoned quarry. If you are interested, there is a small pull off on the left which may offer a slightly better view of this area.

Depending on the time of the year and the amount of foliage, you can see an old quarry stick still standing on the west side of the pit. These wooden masts were used in conjunction with cables and carriages to hoist blocks of slate from the pit to the surface. Very few remain standing today, but at the height of the industry in the early 1900s several hundred would have been in use.

Continue north. County Route 25 will become Vermont Route 31.
3. **Hilltop Slate Sign** - Approximately 1/2 mile after the abandoned quarry there is a red barn with the words Hilltop Slate Co. painted on the side, though slightly obscured by age.

In the 1940s this barn was used as a billboard for the company, advertising their slate flag stone. Large slate dumps are noticeable in the distance. Also note that many of the roofs are still made with the semi-weathering slates that are characteristic of the south part of the Slate Valley.

4. **Western Slate Company, McCarthey Quarry Rd.** - About 1 mile past the red barn, across a field on your left you will see several old slate dumps which mark the site of Western Slate Co., which is still in operation.

The large conical slate dumps were created when quarries were using the quarry stick method for extracting blocks. Each piece of slate in the dump was handled by quarry-men’s hands, a testimony to the incredible amount of work accomplished in this area. South Poultney is noted for its beautiful green and gray slate; and, though many of the quarries are not visible from the major roads, this area still thrives in slate production.
5. Poultney, Vermont - Shortly after passing Western Slate Company, you will come to Poultney, Vt., where Route 31 becomes Route 30. At the stop light at the Main St. intersection, turn left. Main St. ends at the entrance to Green Mountain College. Turn right, and then turn left onto Church St. You will return to Vermont Route 30. Turn left and proceed north on Route 30.

Poultney is located in the heart of the Slate Valley and features many slate applications throughout the village. Notice the Town Office on your left as you approach Main St. With a slate roof, slate cladding, and sculpings, this building beautifully showcases the many uses of slate. The Stonebridge Inn, located a short distance north of the Main St. intersection, was recently renovated and now serves as a Visitor and Community Center. The slate roof is made from both recycled and new slates. As you proceed along Poultney’s Main St., you begin to see the transition from the semi-weathering slates of the south end of the valley to the unfading purple and green slates that are common in the north. Green Mountain College showcases several slate applications, and the Episcopal Church on the left side of Church St. as you head back to Route 30 has one of the most decorative slate roofs in town.

Continue north on Route 30 for about three miles until you reach the Farnham Rd. on your left. Turn left. At the end of Farnham Rd., turn right onto the York St. Extension. The York St. Extension comes to a Y in the road after about one mile. Turn right at the Y. This is Saltis Rd.

North Poultney is still a hive of quarrying activity, so you will likely see the heavy machinery at work in some of the pits as you pass by.
6. **Eureka Quarry** - This quarry, located in North Poultney, is the longest continuously operated slate quarry in this area. It opened in 1852 and has been a viable pit ever since. Eureka also has one of the last remaining quarry sticks still standing on the top of its dump. Many of the historic outbuildings, including an engine house, blacksmith shop, and mill are also still standing. In 1989 the Smithsonian Institute came to this quarry to document the use of quarry sticks and aerial carriers, a disappearing industrial technology for extracting slate used from the 1880s to the 1970s. The video they produced is a part of the Slate Valley Museum’s permanent collection, and the Owen Jone’s carriage filmed in the video is on display in the museum’s HEAVY LIFTING exhibit.

Also notice the color of the slate from this pit by looking at the dump. North Poultney slate is commonly purple or unfading green, and both colors are found in this single quarry.

Just passed the Eureka Quarry and a large farm on your left, turn left onto Blissville Rd., again heading north. Blissville Rd. ends at Route 4A. Turn left and then an immediate right onto West Castleton Rd. Continue along the shore of Lake Bomoseen.

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7. **Lake Bomoseen** - This glacial lake is the largest in the Lakes Region, and was an important part of Slate Valley industrial history. As the glaciers retreated, dropping their sediments and water, a chain of long, narrow, sandy bottomed lakes formed. Glacier’s were not only responsible for creating the lakes in the Slate Valley, but also eroded away much of the bedrock, exposing the slate deposit. When quarry operations began on the edge of Lake Bomoseen, barges and sledges were used to move the products to the rail siding in Hydeville.
Continue winding north along West Castleton Rd., heading for Lake Bomoseen State Park.

If you are interested in walking the West Castleton Slate History Tour, park inside the park and retrieve a brochure from the park attendant.

If you would prefer to continue the driving tour, pass the park entrance and turn right onto Cedar Mountain Rd.

**8a. West Castleton Railroad and Slate Company Slate Buildings** - Directly in front you is a trio of slate houses. The first was the Company Store and still has the bell that called the quarrymen to work and signaled day’s end. The other two served as the offices and manager’s house. When the West Castleton Railroad and Slate company was established in 1852, it was considered one of the finest situations for quarrying slate and quickly blossomed into a thriving enterprise.

Return to West Castleton Rd, and turn right. In approximately 100 yards, veer right onto a dirt road, Moscow Rd. Look for the ruins of a mill on your right.

**8b. West Castleton Railroad and Slate Company Mill** - The ruins of the enormous mill, which are located a short distance away on Moscow Rd., are testimony to the scale of this operation. This company was large enough that a fire at the mill in 1871 made the front page of the New York Times newspaper.

After passing the mill, veer left and then right onto Scotch Hill Rd., a paved road. As you approach the shores of Glen Lake you will see an exposed rock face on your right.
9. **Glen Lake Syncline** - Slate is a metamorphic stone formed by heat and intense pressure. The pressure is the result of the movement of the plates that make up the Earth’s surface over millions of years. This exposed rock face shows the bottom of a massive fold in the rock. Geologists refer to this type of fold as a syncline. The top part of a fold would be called an anticline, in this case eroded away by a period of glaciations 10,000 years ago.

Proceed south along Scotch Hill Rd., which leads to Fair Haven, Vt.

10. **Scotch Hill Slate Quarries** - This area of Fair Haven is where slate quarrying began in Western Rutland County. Started here on a small scale in 1839 by Alonson Allen and Caleb Ranney, slate quarrying had spread through the entire valley by the late 1800s.

11. **1851 House** - Shortly after passing the Scotch Hill Quarry Historic Marker, you will see a white farmhouse on the right side of the road with a purple slate roof. The year the home was built, 1851, is designed on the roof in green slate, testimony to the longevity of Slate Valley roofing slates.
12. **Fair Haven, Vt.** - Scotch Hill Rd. will pass over Vermont Route 4, and enter the town of Fair Haven. Continue straight to Main St.

*Fair Haven is at the north end of the Slate Valley and has several beautiful houses with decorative slate roofs. Feel free to walk through the park downtown and patronize the many shops along the Main St.*

Follow Main St. south which becomes Route 22A. Proceed south along 22A for several miles. You will note many applications of slate along the way, numerous slate mills and quarries, and sweeping views of the Slate Valley. When you reach Middle Granville, turn left onto Middle Granville Rd., and cross the Mettowee River, near Chapman’s General Store.

After crossing the Mettowee River, turn left onto Depot St. Less than a quarter mile up the road, on your right, you will see the entrance to the Elmwood Cemetery. Turn right into the cemetery.

13. **Elmwood Cemetery** - Slate is a very versatile material, used for a myriad of applications, though roofing slate makes up 90% of the industry’s production. One of the uses for slate is gravestones. Elmwood Cemetery in Middle Granville has several beautiful examples, especially those that date from the 1800s in the Welsh section located in the cemetery’s southwest corner. Because of the density of the stone, slate gravestones maintain their lettering far better than marble headstones. One of the largest monuments in Elmwood Cemetery is that of Hugh W. Hughes, the purported “Slate King of America”, who commissioned a life-size statue in his own image.
Return to the Middle Granville Road and turn left. Be mindful of the speed limit, and continue back towards Granville’s Main St.

Along the route back to Granville there are several exceptional examples of slate applications. You will notice a house on the right side of the road that is made from slate blocks and has a slate roof. The Town Highway Department building, on your left, is made of slate blocks, and a small graveyard on your left is surrounded by a low slate wall. One shining example of slate as a building material along this route is the Sheldon Mansion, on the left, now being operated as a Bed and Breakfast. Built as the mansion of slate baron Fred C. Sheldon, it served as the Emma Lang Stevens Memorial Hospital for several years. It is built almost entirely of red slate blocks.

On your left, just before you reach Main St., is an example of a more modern architectural slate application—slate cladding on the face of the Verizon Building.

This concludes the Slate Valley Museum Driving Tour. Please feel free to visit the Granville Area Chamber of Commerce or return to the museum to find information on local places to eat and stay and attractions to visit. You are welcome to use our picnic area in back of the museum along the Mettowee River. After a rest, perhaps you would enjoy the museum’s slate Walking Tour of Granville, which will allow you to see examples of slate application up close.