The Lehigh slate district of Northampton and Lehigh counties has long been the leading slate-producing region of the United States. The slate industry for over 100 years has been the most important industry of nearly all the communities in the northern part of the two counties. A traveler passing through Wind Gap, Pen Argyl, Bangor, Danielsville, Slatington, Slatedale or almost a score of other villages cannot fail to be impressed with the evidence of extensive slate operations as he views the numerous excavations and the “mountains” of waste rock that dominate the landscape.

From Pennsylvania quarries and mills all varieties of slate products except slate pencils are obtained. The list includes roofing slate, mill stock, marbleized slate, slate granules, and pulverized slate. “Mill stock” is a comprehensive term covering rough or finished slate that is used for structural purposes or in interior furnishings of buildings. It includes slate for structural and sanitary purposes (e.g., sinks, mantels, dripboards, shower stalls, toilet stalls, stair risers, insulating wall board, and the like), grave vaults and covers, billiard table tops, electrical insulation and switchboard material (together classed as “electrical slate”), blackboards and bulletin boards, school slates, and marbleized slate. Slate granules are used for surfacing prepared roofing, and slate flour as a filler. Among the districts where slate is now being quarried the “soft” slate of the Lehigh-Northampton district yields all of these products; the “hard” belt in the Lehigh-Northampton district furnishes today only crushed slate, roofing slate, and slate for such structural and sanitary uses as will require no finishing. The great proportion of the slate production of the State is in the form of roofing slate.

Pennsylvania leads all other States in slate production. In 1939 the value of slate produced amounted to $3,056,853 or 45 percent of the value of all slate produced in the United States. Lehigh County made about 10 percent of the output of the State.

Pennsylvania is the only State commonly producing blackboard slate, although very small amounts have come from other localities in certain years. The yield is entirely from the Lehigh-Northampton district. All of the production comes from the neighborhood of Bangor, of Pen Argyl and Wind Gap, or Slatington, Berlinsville, and Slatedale.

History.—Fritts (1877) says that a company for quarrying slate in Northampton County was incorporated in 1805. Finch in 1824 reported that slate quarries had been opened “near the banks of the Delaware” but the product was regarded as inferior.

“. . . The first operation recorded was in the hard belt by a company from Baltimore which in 1828 began quarrying west of Laurys Station in Whitehall township, probably at the Rockdale quarry, Lehigh County.

*NOTE: In 1933 this Survey published “Slate in Pennsylvania” (400 pp.), by Charles H. Behre, Jr. Most of the volume concerns the slate deposits and industry of Lehigh and Northampton Counties. Inasmuch as this report is still in print and readily obtainable, it would manifestly be inadvisable to republish any considerable portion of that volume here or to attempt to duplicate this work. For that reason the discussion here is brief and limited to only a few considerations. The account is written by Miller with quotations from Behre’s report.