

The church and its village

Built between 1854 and 1856, at the time of the establishment of the parish, the church of Warmifontaine is dedicated to Saint Martin. It replaced an earlier chapel built in 1689, which depended on the parish of Montplainchamps.

However, the most important devotion in the village is to Saint Barbara, the patron saint, among others, of miners. On her feast day, a statue of the saint was carried through the village. After the mass in her honour, a meal was served to the slate quarry workers, who were given the day off for the occasion. A statue of the saint stood at the entrance of the shaft bearing her name. Workers would make the sign of the cross before descending into the slate quarry shaft.

Saint Martin gave his name to another, secondary shaft of the slate quarries located on the heights of the village at a place called “Le Plane”, which was operated for a few years at the beginning of the 20th century.

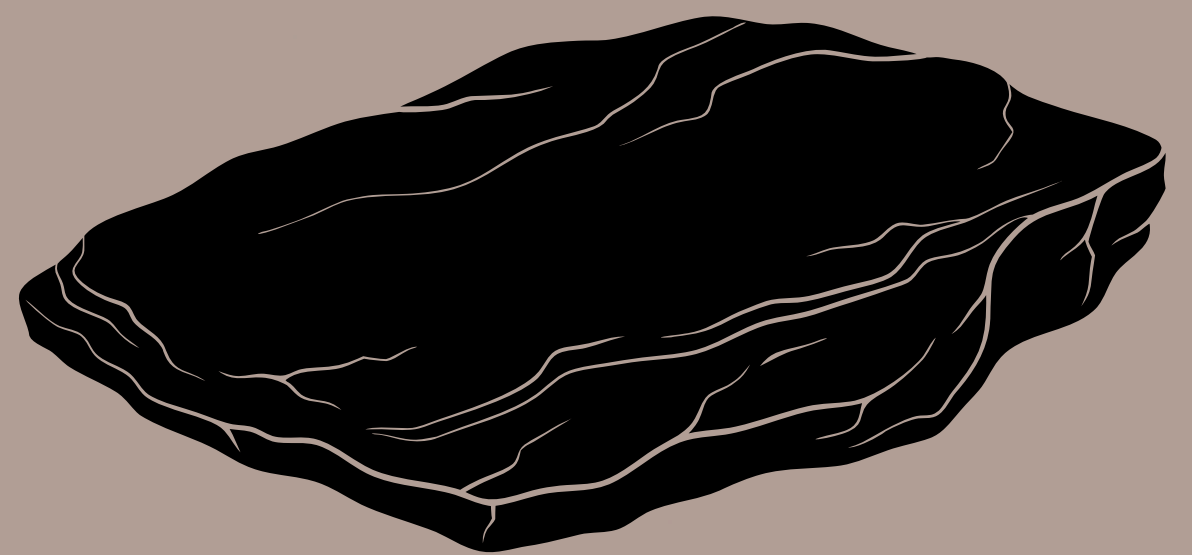
In 1912, when a gallery of the slate quarries collapsed, fears arose for the church. Cracks appeared in the paving. After some repairs, the danger passed, and the church still stands before you today. Some interior modifications were carried out in the late 1950s, and a new coat of paint refreshed it in 2018.



The quality and reputation of the slate produced from the Sainte-Barbe shaft, in the centre of the village, led to a surge in sales. To meet demand, a second shaft (Saint Martin) was dug on the heights of the village at a place called Le Plane. The company built a row of small houses (in the “coron” style) to accommodate the workers. As the shaft did not produce the expected results, it was closed a few years later. The houses are still occupied today, often merged in pairs to make them larger and more comfortable.



From the second half of the 19th century onwards, Warmifontaine developed around the slate quarries, making it quite atypical compared to other villages in the region. Agriculture played a smaller role here. There are few traditional three-part Ardennes farm buildings (dwelling, stable, barn). Most of the houses, built close together, are modest and consist of a small living unit typical of working-class regions. A small shed is sometimes present to house two or three animals (pig, cow), helping to improve daily life.



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