

## MINERAL SPOTLIGHT ON NONMETALLIC DEPOSITS

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NONMETALLIC mining held the spotlight in Wyoming mineral industries during 1948. Nonmetallic rocks and minerals were produced in larger quantities and in greater variety than ever before. Important new mining projects got into full swing, new processing and treating plants were constructed and old operations were expanded.

### NONMETALLIC MINING AND PROCESSING

**Bentonite** — Wyoming's bentonite industry was characterized by a record production during 1948 and by the construction of two new large bentonite mills. Wyoming is the leading bentonite producing state and about 35 per cent of the nation's production comes from northeastern Wyoming, aggregating about 250,000 tons per year. Main uses of bentonite, which is a colloidal clay occurring as sedimentary beds, are in oil refining, in rotary drilling muds and in foundries, although many other uses are known.

Bentonite mills operate at Moorcroft, Upton, Osage and Casper. A new modern plant has been completed and another is under construction, both in the northeastern corner of Wyoming. In September the Baroid sales division of the National Lead Co. completed a plant at Aladdin which is of large capacity and is equipped with three rotary dryers and four Raymond grinding mills. Bentonite is mined at nearby points in Wyoming and South Dakota. The Wyodak Chemical Co. is constructing a plant near Colony equipped with thermostatically controlled dryers, modern pulverizers and a complete dust-collecting system. The plant will have a productive capacity of 350 tons per day and is so constructed that additional equip-

ment may be installed to double this output.

**Phosphate Rock** — The year 1948, marked the first real production of phosphate rock in the state. The large strip mine of the San Francisco Chemical Co., located at Leele, about 20 miles south of Cokeville, on the Oregon Short Line, in Lincoln county, operated during the year. Main effort, however, was on construction, but at the year's end the mine was ready for full production. A railroad spur has been built to the mine and a modern crushing, pulverizing and bagging plant constructed. Crushing facilities are almost unlimited and the capacity of the two pulverizers is 200,000 tons per year. The rock is not processed but is shipped for direct application in the raw form to phosphate-deficient soils. The phosphate rock is being stripped mined, with operations on a 6-foot bed of exceptionally high-grade rock carrying from 32 to 35 per cent phosphorus pentoxide. Slightly leaner rock lies just below the bed now being mined. The reserve of phosphate rock is large.

Phosphate Mines, Inc., is opening the second mine in Lincoln county at a point about 16 miles northwest of Kemmerer. An underground mine is being developed to operate on a 7-foot vein of high-grade rock. The mine is still in the development stage but full production is expected in 1949.

**Trona** — The deep mine of the Westvaco Chlorine Products Co., located about 15 miles west of Green River, produced trona throughout most of 1948 for the manufacture of soda ash in the adjacent treating plant. The trona is a natural sodium carbonate which occurs as a flat-lying bed at a depth of about 1,500. A 1,600-foot vertical shaft penetrates the bed and extends

## Non-Metallic Mining See More Growth

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