

Bentonite Plant New Casper Industry

Large Deposits of Valuable Clay Discovered in Natrona County

FOUND in five Western states, bentonite is a superfine clay formed by the weathering of wind-blown volcanic ash with many and varied uses. The Casper Bentonite company, a privately owned partnership, is located approximately one and a half miles west of the city and processes the mineral for oil-well drilling purposes.

The bentonite processed at the plant comes from deposits within a 13-mile area of Casper. There is an unlimited supply within a very short distance of Casper, making bright prospects of bentonite processing by company here. These deposits are of a quality said to be equally as good as those found in other parts of the state, although there are several different varieties of bentonite.

The initial opening of the Casper plant was Nov. 20, but it was necessary to close at the first of the year, 1946, for the installation of new equipment. The plant resumed operation Feb. 4 on an eight-hour basis. The end of the month the company was to be on a 24-hour basis. The output at present is approximately 100 tons per day, but

the company has new equipment waiting to be installed which will increase the output 30 per cent.

Mined in Large Clumps

When bentonite is brought in from the deposits, it is in large damp clumps. It is necessary in the processing to crush and dry these clumps. While some of the equipment in the all-metal building is permanent, the machinery which does the crushing is not. The structure and the elevator leading to the 37-foot dehydrator are made of wood, but improvements have been made and as soon as materials are available a new and permanent one will be built. Much of the equipment has been designed or improved by the men in the Casper Bentonite company.

When the clumps of bentonite have been crushed, they are taken in an upshaft to the dehydrator. At this end, the heat reaches about 1,200 degrees. The bentonite is continually revolving in this machine and when it reaches the far end, where the temperature is only about 250 degrees, it is hard and dry and resembles small white pebbles.

As it leaves the dehydrator, the

mineral is stored above the grinder into which it is fed for the final stage of the processing. When the processing is completed, the bentonite is shipped to Oklahoma, Texas, Colorado and Kansas.

Many Uses Noted

Bentonite, a non-poisonous and non-explosive substance, has many uses. One of the largest outlets for it is in the foundry trades. Here it is used as a bonding agent for burned sand. The non-poisonous feature of bentonite assures safety to cosmeticians who use it as a base for cosmetics, ointments and salves, and it also has medicinal uses.

Used in the rubber industry, bentonite thickens rubber latex. The latex contains 30 to 40 per cent of rubber and in that state is a watery substance and the bentonite is used to thicken it. In oil-well drilling it is used for thickening, suspending and wellsealing.

More and more industries are finding new and advantageous benefits from bentonite. It is felt by those working with the material that soon there will not be an industry which does not in some way, directly or indirectly, use bentonite.

New Casper Plant Opens Near Bentonite Fields

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