

NONMETALILCS

Bentonite. — Wyoming remained the leading bentonite-producing state and although only preliminary figures are available, most operators reported increased output. The major yield has been from the Black Hills area in Crook and Weston Counties, where the American Colloid Co., the Baroid Sales Division of the National Lead Co., and the Black Hills Bentonite Co. are important producers. Bentonite is also produced in the Casper and Kaycee areas, principally by the Benton Clay Co., but the great reserves in the latter area have hardly been touched. The Big Horn Basin is also a producer and recent mining and processing by the Magnet Cove Barium Corp. have added greatly to the state's production. Bentonite mining in Albany County, however, has been terminated by Schundler and Co. because of inadequate reserves in the Rock River area.

Bentonite is a clay possessing peculiar colloidal properties which make it especially useful in muds used in rotary oil well drilling. It is also extensively used as a binder for foundry sands. Although these two uses consume about 90 per cent of the output, Mr. A. C. Harding, general manager of the Black Hills Bentonite Co., points out that Wyoming bentonite may be in high demand in the future for use in pelletizing the concentrates from low grade iron ores, known as taconite, which will become more important as the high grade ores of the Lake Superior district are depleted.

The Wyoming bentonite beds originated through falls of volcanic ash into a sea which covered Wyoming during Cretaceous time, about 100 million years ago. Subsequently the ash was altered to clay.

Non-Metallic Update For Prior Year 1953

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