

# BENTONITE PRODUCED IN THREE COUNTIES OF STATE

Output Stabilized  
For Present With  
20,000-Ton Yield

By PAUL R. PETERSON,  
(Owens Chemical Products Co.)  
WYOMING bentonite was first marketed in a limited way as early as 1882 from deposits in Albany county on Rock Creek, and occasional attempts were made to work deposits elsewhere in the state but it was not until 1919 that any serious attempt was made to develop a market for this interesting clay in industrial centers.

Since the early history of bentonite is covered fully in the publications of the U. S. Geological Survey and recent writers quoting therefrom, no attempt will be made in this short article to repeat this history. The developments of recent years have been adequately described, and while this brief article does not permit an exhaustive chronicle there are important facts which should be known by anyone interested in the subject.

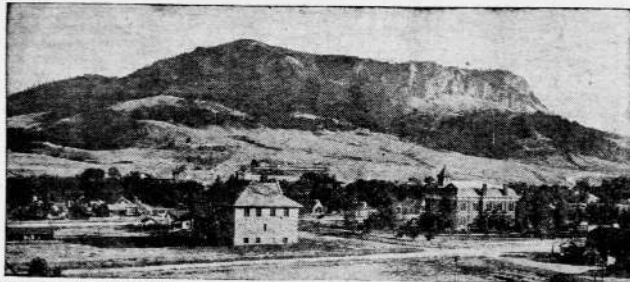
Much has been written about the romance of American business, the small plant with its antique equipment, long hours of what seemed fruitless toil, an idea and an ideal, the slow rise to a place in industry, and eventually blossoming into an industry whose products go to all parts of the world.

The bentonite producers of Wyoming were confronted with a situation parallel to this. It required men of vision to see that in the future this raw product would become important in many large industries located many miles from Wyoming, and to dedicate their time and resources to its development.

During the early years of the industry few uses were known for bentonite, and the producers were confronted with the problem of acquainting the industries with its possibilities.

**Many Problems Solved.**  
A certain measure of success has been achieved in solving this problem, and in the development of a market, through a long and consistent campaign of introduction to potential consumers, of experimental research and of education. Producers have also solved the major problems of production, learned how to handle the material and prepare it in the form most adaptable to ready utilization.

Bentonite, of the colloidal type, is



Sundance, county seat of Crook county, occupies a picturesque setting under a mountain of the same name.

strictly a surface mineral not extending to any considerable depth underground, of highly variable moisture content in the various deposits and of variable purity. It can readily be seen that its production in a form and quality adaptable to its proper utilization requires special knowledge of its properties, quality and handling.

The hit and miss groping operations of yesterday have given way to large well equipped plants for the drying and grinding of bentonite, with present capacities capable of taking care of increased production for years to come. Some of the producers maintain well equipped laboratories where trained men are at work solving new problems and working toward the development of new uses.

The bentonite industry is still in its infancy but it is already the victim of grave overproduction. The existing plants are capable of taking care of several times the demand of the present markets. There are several known deposits in this state that are not being worked at the present time, but these deposits must await the future development of additional markets before the profitable exploitation of them can be undertaken.

**New Development Unwise.**  
What the Wyoming bentonite industry needs is the cooperation of the existing agencies toward extending the ultimate utilization of the material as prepared for markets, instead of the further exploitation and overdevelopment of deposits of the raw material.

The present production of bentonite in Wyoming is approximately 20,000 tons annually. The principal points of operation at the present time are at Medicine Bow in Car-

bon county and at Newcastle, Osage, Upson, and Clay Spur in Weston county. There is some development work going on in Park and Big Horn counties.

The producers at the present time employ in this state approximately 55 men in mining bentonite and preparing it for market.

Much could be written regarding

the mining and marketing of bentonite but in this brief article we have endeavored to give a short outline of the condition which confronts the bentonite industry as an industry which began with more than an idea has become a fact it now stands as an important industry of this state.

Further, it is significant that the producers through their persistent service and untiring efforts have built up in this state an industry which has grown to have an influence, serving industries not only in the United States and Canada, but in many of the foreign countries.

**MINING CONGRESS**  
Mining activity of Wyoming in recent years has received its greatest impetus from interest aroused by the annual mining congress sponsored by the department of resources and industry in conjunction with the geological department. Last year's congress was held in Lander and visitors were taken on a trip to the South Pass-Atlantic City gold mining region.



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