

Slate Plant Will Be Built Near Mena in Heath Valley.

Special to the Gazette. 11-12-30
Mena, Nov. 11.—A new industry for the Ouachita highlands is to start about January 1. Otto Lehrach Jr., of Kansas City is here to build a plant and place machinery for the making of slate products by the Lehrach Contracting and Engineering Company. Two carloads of machinery have been received and will be moved to the plant site in the Heath valley, southeast of Mena, where extensive beds of slate are located.

Colored Slate Deposits to Be Developed.

Special to the Gazette. 1-21-31
Hot Springs, Jan. 20.—Announcement is made by L. A. Porter of Hot Springs that Island Wright and E. B. Bird, both of Little Rock, within 60 days, will begin the development of a big colored slate deposit that Bird, geologist and mining engineer, has located near Norman, Montgomery county. The deposit is on 6,900 acres, which are under lease and is the only colored slate deposit in the country outside of Vermont and Pennsylvania.

Colored Slate Deposit Found on Pulaski County Farm.

Following publication in the Gazette yesterday of an article from Hot Springs giving an account of plans to develop a colored slate deposit near Norman, Montgomery county, Paul Seepacher, owner of a 40-acre tract on the Remount road, reported to the Gazette that there is a large deposit of what he believes is brown slate on his land. The Hot Springs item said it is believed that the Montgomery county deposit is the only colored slate deposit in this country, except in Vermont and Pennsylvania. G. C. Branner, state geologist, said yesterday that his department has made no special investigation of either the Montgomery county or Pulaski county deposits, but that it is known that there are large deposits of slate in a variety of colors in several different sections of the state.

INTEREST AROUSED IN STATE DEPOSITS

Possibilities of Increased Use of Product Are Pointed Out.

Out. 1-26-1931
The industrial survey that is being conducted in Arkansas by the American Mining Congress, in co-operation with the State Chamber of Commerce and other interests, has aroused interest in the state's slate deposits and the possibility of increased use of Arkansas slate in construction work, it was said in a bulletin received yesterday from the Mining Congress headquarters. Montgomery county is one of the important slate producing areas. Several plants have been in operation there and a new one is to be established soon near Mena, Polk county.

West of Norman there are some more large deposits. Slate crops out on each side of the valley of Bird creek for a considerable distance. The area has been investigated recently with a view to development.

In some places the depth of the slate deposit is estimated at more than 30 feet. In other parts of the area the slate is more than 20 feet deep. The colors are red and olive green, and it is said that there would be no great complications to the job of quarrying the slate.

The colors would make the slate desirable for roofing purposes and as it seems to split readily it could be used for shingles, it was said. It would be possible also to produce slabs or blocks for shipment to sawing plants.

"Eastern interests to whom samples of red and green slate from this area were submitted," the bulletin said, "have stated that they are interested in the material and its attractive color and that rough surface slates, incident to this area, are in demand by architects. The slate of this region would have a large marketing area from Missouri south to the Gulf and from Alabama west to include Louisiana, Arkansas, Texas, Oklahoma and Kansas."

Part of the information in the bulletin is credited to a report prepared by A. H. Purdue, professor of geology at the University of Arkansas. Dr. Henry Mace Payne, consulting engineer to the American Congress, who is conducting the surveys in Arkansas, was quoted as follows:

"Considering the abundance, quality and diverse coloring of Arkansas slates, it is remarkable that no greater development has taken place in that state. The slate area is in the Ouachita mountains, south of the Arkansas river, from Little Rock west to Mena. It includes the greater part of Saline, Garland and Montgomery counties, a district 100 miles long and 15 to 20 miles wide. The slate measures are over 8,000 feet in thickness.

"Large deposits of black, red and green slates, suitable for preparing roofing material, are found near Caddo Gap. The colors vary from deep black through blue, dark red, light red, greenish-gray, sea green, light green, light gray and dark gray, the latter spangled with minute scales of mica."

OUACHITA QUARRIES TO MARKET SLATE

Huge Deposit in National Forest Has Been Leased From Government.

10-31-31
The Ouachita Quarries has been formed as a company for the marketing of slate from extensive deposits in the Ouachita National Forest, Montgomery county, Ivan Wright, manager of the company, announced. Quarries have been opened on the 2,000 acres of land leased from the government and the raw stone will be brought to Little Rock, where it will be milled into slate shingles, flag stones, and composition roofing, it was announced.

E. B. Bird, geologist and engineer, has participated in the development of the deposits. Dr. George C. Branner, state geologist, and W. M. Weigel of the Mineral Department of the Missouri Pacific Lines has inspected the deposits and announced that they are capable of commercial development, Mr. Wright said.

SLATE SPECIMENS FOR U. S. TREASURY

State C. of C. Interests Officials in Possible Use of Materials.

11-21-31
The Arkansas State Chamber of Commerce announced last night that it had succeeded in interesting the Treasury Department at Washington in the possibility of utilizing Arkansas slate in the federal building construction program and that it had been called upon to supply samples of the material. The state possesses slate of almost every color, from the green that has been a virtual monopoly with Vermont, and the red of New York, on through black, dark blue, light and dark gray and the chamber brought this to the attention of the federal officials several weeks ago in the hope that it might be possible through this outlet to revive an Arkansas industry that has been virtually suspended several years.

While the Arkansas slate deposits are in a strip of country from 10 to 30 miles long, beginning in Pulaski county and extending southwestward to Montgomery, thence west to the center of Polk county in the vicinity of Mena, the best grades and colors are said to be in Montgomery and Polk. Formerly nearly a score of quarries were operating in the two counties but in recent years, largely because of the development of the composition roof and other substitutes for slate, they have been inactive except for one or two.

The Treasury's request for samples of slate does not guarantee its inclusion in the specifications for buildings, the chamber said, and it advised against any enthusiasm on the part of those who are interested in slate bearing lands or idle quarries. Should the government determine to add slate to its building materials any one of a

number of plants now idle could resume operations and produce the required quantities with no further effort or initial expense than the employment of workers. Dudley V. Hadlock, manager of the state chamber, said.

Arkansas Slate Goes to Market

By DON D. CLEMENT.

Thirty-five years ago Eastern capitalists made large investments in Polk county to develop slate fields 16 miles east of Mena. They opened up several quarries and installed machinery in a plant at Mena for dressing the slate and making shingles preparatory to shipping to market.

This was before the days of good roads and motor truck transportation and slate from the quarries was hauled over rough roads to Mena, much breakage resulting. Freight rates were high. These difficulties led to abandonment of the slate fields. The mill was dismantled and the equipment moved away. For years the fields were not used. The old buildings there decayed, all but the roofs—the slate shingles being as good today as when they were put on.

Early in 1930, Otto J. Lehrach, a retired contractor of Kansas City, Mo., became interested. He made trips to the slate fields, took samples of the different slates, and visited the leading roofing material companies. Trial orders resulted. The demand for slate shingles increased and soon a big business for western Arkansas was developed.

On the site of the old National Slate Company, Mr. Lehrach and his son opened quarries. Blue-black, black, red and green slate are taken from the quarry. Stratas of different colors are found in the same quarry, but each vein holds its own color. Test holes drilled on the mountain side show that the slate ranges in all directions and there seems no limit to the deposit.

Once the quarry was opened, it was a simple matter to get the slate loose and ready for the mill. A small "shot" loosens 25 to 50 yards, and so skilled are those in charge of the shooting that they can estimate within a few yards the amount of material each shot will loosen.

The slate, in large slabs, is loaded on trucks and carried down the mountain to the mill, where it is unloaded on a storage pile and used as needed.

At the bottom of the mill the slabs are broken into smaller pieces and fed into a crusher, which pulverizes the slate. It falls on a conveyor and is taken to the top of the mill, which resembles a grain elevator, with a cupola, at top, 60 feet from the ground.

The slate, now called "granules," goes through the first vibrator, where it is screened, the larger pieces taken out, the dirt and dust removed and blown by air to a dump outside. The larger pieces of slate fall to the bottom and again are crushed. The product goes through three other machines, each screen smaller, until the last vibrator turns the stream of slate out in uniform size, free from dirt. The slate then goes to a mixer, the granules being about the size of wheat grains.

The mixer came into use when it was found that the modern home builder wants colors for his roof to match and harmonize with the rest of the building. Such colors are obtained often in the natural slate colors, but if desired, these colors can be emphasized by adding a fast-color paint, which impregnates the granules. This is done by a revolving cylinder, oil and mineral colors being added to the slate in a 10-minute whirl.

From the top of the plant, gravity takes the material to the lower bins, where it is dropped into trucks and hauled to the railroad 16 miles away, loaded into box-cars and sent to the roofing manufacturers. A 100-horsepower Diesel engine supplies the power for the machinery of the plant.

Since August the plant has been operating 24 hours a day most of the time and the products have been shipped to several large roofing companies.

Slab slate for mantles, billiard table tops, and electrical switchboards are made from slate in the Polk county field. This slate takes a high polish and can be cut and fitted easily.

MAGNET COVE FIRM UTILIZING DEPOSIT

Kimzey - Lawrence Company Produces Crushed Colored Stone With Many Uses.

10-17-1935
The Kimzey-Lawrence Company of Magnet Cove is composed of J. W. Kimzey and J. U. Lawrence. The company deals in Magnet Cove mineral specimens of which, according to Mr. Lawrence, include 112 or more varieties. The famous lodestone deposit of Magnet Cove is on Mr. Kimzey's property.

The company also produces crushed colored stone, used in the making of floorings and pavement and also as roofing granules. The green nepheline syenite, which is quarried and crushed to size for roofing granules is of six-point hardness, and a good deal more costly to manufacture than average granule slate. It has an angular cleavage, causing it to imbed more firmly in the asphalt than slate or artificially colored screened sand. Freezing weather, hail or sleet fails to loosen it from its natural asphalt base. Its hardness prevents oxidation or fading of color, which

is a deep natural green, Mr. Lawrence said.

After extensive laboratory and practical tests by the Williams Roofing Company, it is found to be far superior to all other granules tested at the same time, Mr. Lawrence said. The Williams Roofing Company, since July, has used over 60 cars of 50 tons each, of this crushed green rock from the quarries in Magnet Cove, Mr. Lawrence said. Mr. Lawrence also said that the Kimzey-Lawrence Company has kept men employed continuously at its plant, and that, through using Arkansas minerals and other natural resources, it will help to promote Arkansas.

Mr. Kimzey, a mineralogist, is more familiar with the mineral deposits in the Magnet Cove area than any one else, and is much interested in the industrialization of this area. He has invited inquiries from companies interested either in obtaining deposits or purchasing the raw or processed minerals.

Greenstone, H. S.