MINE PRODUCTION RECORD SET IN 1965

By

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Mine production in Washington State reached an all-time high in 1965 according to a report from the Division of Mines and Geology of the State Department of Conservation. Mineral output at $91 million was a healthy 12 percent greater than the previous record set in 1964.

Data compiled by the U.S. Bureau of Mines with the help of the State Department of Conservation show that, with minor fluctuations, the State's mineral production has been steadily increasing since 1933, when it was valued at just over $9 million. This 10-fold increase is unmatched—not even remotely approached—by the State's other extractive industries, farming, logging, and fishing.

A comparison of mineral production values for 1965 with those of the previous year shows substantial increases for lead, sand and gravel, stone, portland cement, diatomite, and talc and soapstone.

Among the largest lode gold mines in the United States were the Knob Hill mine of Knob Hill Mines, Inc. at Republic and the Gold King mine of L-D Mines at Wenatchee. Day Mines, Inc. of Wallace, Idaho, has an interest in both of these properties. Day's Gold Dollar property at Republic is adjacent to the Knob Hill mine and is operated by Knob Hill Mines, Inc. Day also owns a 30 percent interest in L-D Mines. The Wenatchee property of L-D Mines is reported to have produced approximately $13½ million in gold in the past 16 years.

In the Swauk district in Kittitas County, placer gold was produced by Gold Placers, Inc. of Ellensburg. The company used a dry-land washing plant, reported to have a capacity of 250 cubic yards of gravel per hour, to rework placer ground that for the most part was mined by hand methods in the early days.

Largest zinc-lead producer in the State, as in previous years, was Pend Oreille Mines & Metals Co. at Metaline Falls. Ore production during the first 9 months of the year was 496,000 tons, down 1 percent from the previous year.

The other important producer of zinc and lead during the year was the Van Stone mine of American Smelting and Refining Co. This open-pit mine and 1,000-ton-per-day mill is in north-central Stevens County about 12 miles south of Northport. The pit is operated two shifts to keep the mill running at capacity 24 hours per day.

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A little farther north and east in Stevens County in the Leadpoint district is the old Anderson pit, now renamed the Calhoun mine, which is being opened up as an underground mine by American Zinc, Lead and Smelting Co. The mine and 1,200-ton-per-day mill are expected to be ready to start production early in 1966. American Zinc shut down its Grandview mine at Metaline Falls and shifted its crew and equipment to the Calhoun property late in 1964.

Aluminum production in 1965 was a record-breaking 532,000 tons of metal, exceeding the published industry capacity of 483,000 tons by 10 percent. Biggest news of the year was the announcement that Intalco Aluminum Corp. would double the size of its plant under construction at Bellingham to a capacity of 152,000 tons per year. By the end of the year construction of the plant was well on its way toward completion, as shown in the accompanying photograph. Construction of the first potline was expected to be completed by April 1966, and the second potline was scheduled for completion by January 1967. Raw alumina for the plant is to be imported from Australia. In 1965 Kaiser Aluminum & Chemical Corp. and the Port of Tacoma announced plans to install unloading and storage facilities in Tacoma to handle alumina from Australia for use in Kaiser's smelters in Tacoma and Spokane. The new port facilities will be in use by 1967.

An important development announced by a portland cement producer in the previous year was followed up early in 1965 by news that Kaiser Cement and Gypsum Corp. had leased a 20-acre property on the Duwamish Waterway in Seattle adjacent to the present plants of Kaiser Gypsum Co. and Glacier Sand & Gravel Co., subsidiaries of Kaiser Cement. Although no date for construction of a cement plant on the side has been set by the company, it is expected that a plant will be built to replace the loss of their subsidiary Olympic Portland Cement Co. plant in Bellingham. Kaiser had been ordered by the Federal Trade Commission to divest itself of the Bellingham plant, largest cement producer in the State.

Construction of Ideal Cement Company's $20-million cement plant on the Duwamish Waterway, announced the previous year, was well underway by the end of 1965. Completion was scheduled for late 1966.

Latest in the series was the announcement in December that Lone Star Cement Corp. would build a $32 to $40 million cement plant near Anacortes. The 4-million-barrel-per-year wet-process plant will be the largest in the State. The company's present plant at Concrete in Skagit County presumably will be abandoned when the new one is built, but the quarry at Concrete will be used to supply the new plant. A company representative said that reserves of limestone are adequate for more than 100 years operations.

Olivine production from the Twin Sisters Mountains in Whatcom and Skagit Counties remained about the same as in 1964. Output, marketed principally for use as foundry sand to consumers in the western states and Canada, was largely by Northwest Olivine Co. of Seattle and Olivine Corp. of Bellingham. A pilot plant to test a process to recover magnesium metal from olivine was operated at Bremerton by Twin Sisters Magnesia and Chemical Corp.

In December a California firm announced plans to build a plant at Centralia to produce silicon metal. The firm, Imperial Metals and Abrasives, Inc., will join two other silicon and ferrosilicon producers already in the State. Ohio Ferro Alloys Corp. operates a plant in Tacoma, and Keokuk Electro-Metals Co. has a plant at Rock Island, near Wenatchee. The silicon metal and ferrosilicon produced are used in alloys of aluminum and in making steel.

STATE ASSISTANCE

The State Division of Mines and Geology of the Department of Conservation conducted fundamental and applied research in 1965 to serve the mineral industries and the public in developing better knowledge of the geology and a more complete utilization of the mineral resources of the State.

Geologic mapping by Washington Division of Mines and Geology and U.S. Geological Survey parties was continued in several areas in both the eastern and western parts of the State during the year. Among these projects were three sponsored jointly by the two agencies, one in the Chewelah area of Stevens County, one in the Loomis area of Okanogan County, and one in the Grays River area of Wahkiakum County. In preparation during the year were reports on the geology of an area south of the Olympic Mountains and on the geology and mineral resources of the Kelso-Longview area. Other reports in various stages of completion were on (1) stone resources of Washington, (2) mineral resources of Whatcom County, (3) mineral resources of King County, (4) geology and mineral resources of an area near Kettle Falls, (5) geology of the Colville area, (6) bibliography and index of the geology and mineral resources of Washington, 1957-1965, (7) limestone in western Washington, (8) geology of the northern Cascade Mountains, (9) geology and mineral resources of the Methow area, (10) pegmatites in Washington, (11) andalusite in northeastern Washington, and (12) geochemical investigations in Washington.

During the year the Division continued to cooperate with the U.S. Geological Survey in topographic mapping within the State. Work continued on three quadrangle maps in the Chiwaukum area near Leavenworth, Chelan County. Work was started on the mapping of two new topographic quadrangles, one east of Colville and one in the Tieton area of Yakima County.