

WHITE LEAD

White lead has been known and used as a pigment for centuries; the Romans and Greeks used the native carbonate of lead or "cerusse," as it was then called, from which the mineralogical name cerussite has arisen. This natural pigment is found only in comparatively small quantities, and it is no wonder that a process for the artificial production of white lead was soon found out and adopted, with the result that natural cerussite is not now used as a pigment.

It is not known when white lead was first made, who made it, or to what country it owes its birth. The oldest known method is that commonly called the "Dutch method," from the supposition that it was invented in Holland; it is described as the Dutch process in an English patent granted in 1787, and there is no doubt but that it is the process referred to in three earlier patents granted in 1622, 1635, and 1745, in which it is spoken of as an old process. Evidently white lead has been made for several centuries. During all this period there has been but little change made in the Dutch process. But in the interval inventors have not been idle, for there is no other pigment which has attracted so much attention at their hands as white lead; and the number of processes and modifications of processes which have been devised, is almost innumerable. With all this invention, the ancient Dutch process still retains its pre-eminence as the best process for the manufacture of white lead.