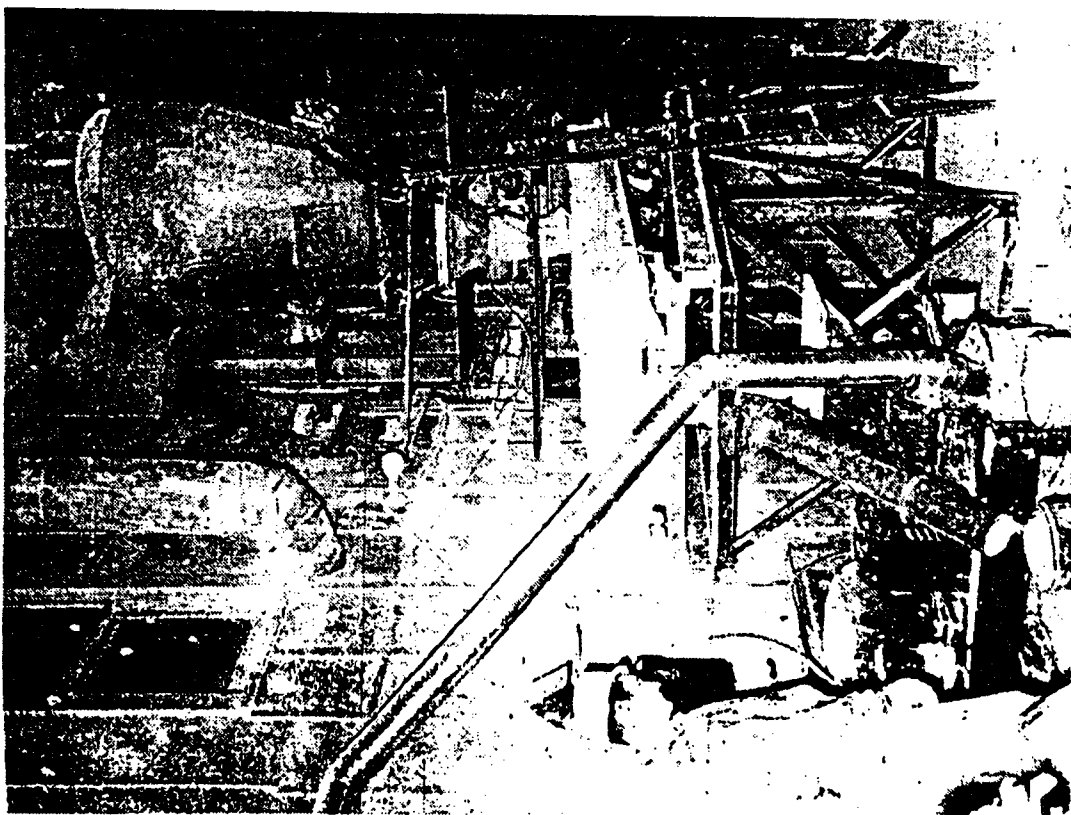




BASIS OF NEW INDUSTRY—Leaded zinc oxide, residue recovered from the "baghouse" at Anaconda Copper Mining Co.'s East Helena smelter, forms the basis of a thriving new

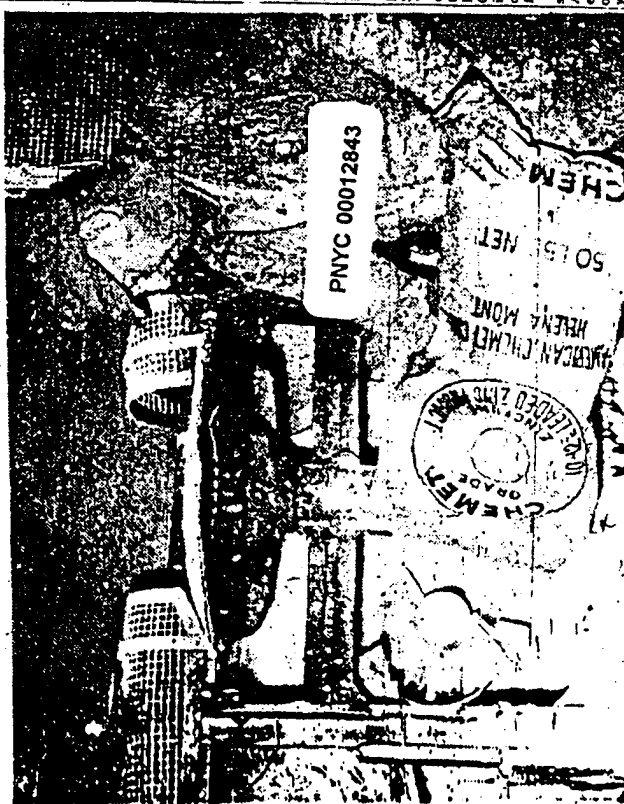


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BASIS OF NEW INDUSTRY—Leaded zinc oxide, residue recovered from the "baghouse" at Anaconda Copper Mining Co.'s East Helena smelter, forms the basis of a thriving new Montana industry. Above photo shows Francis E. Smith, foreman at American Chemet's East Helena plant, examining feeder hopper into which zinc oxide powder is carried by conveyor after being heated to high temperature. Powder drops from hopper into screener, thence into cans for transfer to sacking room. Carl Griffith, operator, inspects flow of powdered zinc oxide into cans. Upper right: W. H. Porter, one of American Chemet's four partners, runs test of zinc oxide at East Helena plant. Powder is subjected to heat of 1300 to 1500 degrees Fahrenheit during tests for color and fineness. At right: Charlie Kokoruda at sacking machine. Below: Guy Waddell, Columbia Paint Co. employee, prepares to pour sack of Chemet's leaded zinc oxide into paint mill at Columbia's plant in Helena. Mill, upper floor of plant, is where thick paste is made of leaded zinc oxide and linseed oil. (Continued next page.)



Two Paint Firms Pioneer New Montana Industry

By Tribune Staff Writer

HELENA—Paint manufacturers don't have a brand new thing in this part of the world—the Indians were skilled at it long before the Lewis and Clark expedition passed this way nearly 150 years ago. But the making of house paint, a wide variety of interior and exterior finishes, is a new Montana industry.

While the present-day manufacture of paint in the Helena valley is far more complex than were the Indian's primitive methods, it has one thing in common with its historic forerunner: Native raw materials are converted, almost on the spot, of their origin, into pigments of great eye-appeal.

Two firms have pioneered in this new enterprise. They are the American Chemet Corp. and the Columbia Paint Co., both under the same ownership. American Chemet, whose plant is located a stone's throw from the Northern Pacific station in East Helena, is the parent corporation, being one year older than Columbia.

American Chemet was organized in July, 1946, by W. W. Shroghshire, S. W. Stockdale, L. H. Larison and W. H. Porter. A small plant was constructed at East Helena that year to utilize a by-product of the East Helena smelter of the Anaconda Copper Mining Co. This by-product is leaded zinc oxide, a residue recovered from smelter flues. This forms the base of the paint.

That leaded zinc oxide is heated, scraped, filtered and sacked at the Chemet plant, now several miles from the smelter. The raw material economy to which this process has led means that more of the "treasure" will stay within Montana's borders.

Some of American Chemet's product goes to Columbia Paint's plant on the northern outskirts of Helena. More goes to paint manufacturers and families industries throughout the United States and other parts of the world. Shipments have gone to such widely separated places as Sweden, South Africa, New Zealand, Germany and Denmark as well as to Alabama, Louisiana, Tennessee, Illinois, Indiana, New York, Pennsylvania, Minnesota, California, Oregon and Washington.

At Columbia's plant, the leaded zinc oxide is mixed with linseed oil and talc—both Montana products, basically, although at present refined to marketable form elsewhere.

Columbia makes more than 80 products. Since their sales area at present is concentrated in Montana, eastern Idaho and northern Wyoming, the firm specializes in finishes that are especially suited to this climate.

L. H. Larison, one of the company's four owners, says that for each gallon of Columbia paint sold in Montana, 80 cents remain in the state. The company began operations here in July, 1947, with four employees—the four partners. Now it has nine full-time employees and during the summer season additional workers are hired.

But the most cheering thing about this new industry to most Montanans is the fact that it makes a definite step toward going back to the raw material economy to which this process has led means that more of the "treasure" will stay within Montana's borders.

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