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Elko Co.

Item 16

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# Snake Mountains Barite

The Snake Mountains barite district lies 15 to 30 airline miles north of Wells. Barite occurs on both sides of the mountains, but the principal development has been on the east flank. Part of the barite is on land supervised by the Bureau of Land Management and part is on private ranchland. Barite was first recognized in the area in 1955 when the Jungle lode claims were staked at the extreme north end of the district. Little work was done until the early 1970's when there was a great increase in demand for Nevada barite; this led to additional discoveries and some small production. In the late 1970's Chromalloy American Corporation began extensive exploration and the area has become a major barite-mining district. At the present time about 6 open-pit mines are in operation, serving 3 processing plants.

The barite occurs as bedded deposits in rocks of Ordovician age. The associated rocks include black chert and argillite, shale, chert conglomerate, and limestone locally. Generally the rocks have low to moderate dips. Structural deformation is common and this, combined to the discontinuous character of the barite units, limits the strike length of the individual deposits. The barite units, which are conformable with bedding, range from a few feet to approximately 40 feet in thickness. All of the ore is processed by jigging or heavy-media separation to remove associated or included country rock. The barite is very-thin to thin-bedded, dark gray due to abundant organic matter, and fine grained. Other than country rock, interstitial quartz and secondary iron oxides are the principal contaminants.

## Selected References:

- Gardner, D. H. (1968) Structure and stratigraphy of the northern part of the Snake Mountains, Elko County, Nevada: Ph.D. thesis, Univ. of Oregon;
- Papke, K. G. (1981) File information, Nevada Bureau of Mines and Geology.

Selected References: (continued)

Peterson, B. L. (1968) Stratigraphy and structure of the Antelope Peak area, Snake Mountains, Elko County, northeastern Nevada; M.S. thesis, Univ. of Oregon.