

"The amount of ore in the rock is insignificant, while the bog ore, though sometimes in considerable quantities is mostly of too poor grade to be of any value." Nevertheless considerable prospecting and mining took place in the area between 1880 and 1900.

The earliest reference to the iron and manganese district is by Dr. Comstock in his "Gold-Silver Report." Dr. Comstock visited this area in 1888 and described numerous small shafts and prospects mostly centered around Martindale. The former town of Martindale was started by the Capital Land and Mining Company during this period and had its beginnings as a mining camp.

There has been no activity in the iron and manganese district over a considerable length of time. All that can now be observed in this area are numerous small caved shafts, adits and prospects most of which are hardly recognizable as such.

The minerals which are collectively known as bauxite are the major ores of aluminum. The bauxite region of Arkansas lies in southern Pulaski County and adjacent Saline County and covers an area of approximately 275 square miles. There are two principal districts, one in Pulaski County about five miles south of Little Rock and the other twenty-five miles to the southwest in Saline County. The bauxite deposits lie entirely in the Gulf Coastal Plain adjacent to large intrusions of nepheline syenite and related igneous rocks.

Bauxite in Pulaski County was first described by W. Byrd Powell in 1842 in a report for the "Antiguanian and Natural History Society of the State of Arkansas." Powell, not realizing its true nature, referred to the bauxite as an "Amygdaloid" in some places "resembling a mass of peas, each of which is solid jasper," in others as "earthy" and at one place "A sponge, with its fibers encrusted with the red oxides of iron."

The next mention of the bauxite is by Owen in his "Second Geological Reconnaissance of Arkansas" (1860). Owens describes several small prospects dug for gold a few years prior to his visit in a "ferruginous amygdaloid of a rather peculiar character." He also mentions that there were found old "Spanish diggings" made in a variety of this amygdaloid rock.

J. Lesley, Topographical Geologist under Owen in 1860, mentions "extensive deposits of amygdaloid, in which are excavations said to have been made by the Spaniards in their search after precious metals." Neither Owen nor Lesley recognized the rock as bauxite.

Bauxite was first identified in Arkansas by John C. Branner, State Geologist, in June of 1887 in a deposit in Pulaski County on the Little Rock-Pine Bluff Highway, where it was being used for road surfacing. This was the same year in which bauxite was found in Georgia and sixty-six years after the mineral had been originally discovered in the village of Baux in southern France, the town from which bauxite takes its name.

Soon after the discovery of bauxite in Pulaski County, other deposits were found in Saline County. Commercial mining began in 1899. By 1903 Arkansas had become the leading producer of bauxite in the United States and has not since that time relinquished its position.