

Wisconsin's Lead Mining Impact

Definition: Lead mining involves gathering galena from under the earth's surface to use in trading or for personal use. Native people in Wisconsin, especially the Ho-Chunk, mined galena for at least 8,000 years. Ho-Chunk women mined galena every spring and fall. They gathered enough galena to use as jewelry, melt and use as body paint, or bury the finest pieces with their dead. They also traded galena for other things from other Native people. Beginning in 1815, European immigrants and U.S. citizens came to Wisconsin to mine galena, convert it into lead, and make their fortunes in the Driftless area.

Impact on Native People	Impact on Environment	Impact on Economy
When Native people discovered Europeans wanted galena, they mined more of it to trade with the Europeans.	At first, Native people took galena from just beneath the surface of the land. This had a minimal impact on the environment.	Galena was another good which Native people could trade to obtain different goods they needed or wanted. Galena was part of the trading economy.
Ho-Chunk lands in southwestern Wisconsin had rich deposits of galena. When European Americans heard about these deposits, they entered Ho-Chunk territory, dug out, and carried out galena they found. By 1825, more than 10,000 miners moved illegally onto Ho-Chunk lands in southern Wisconsin.	After they began using lead for ammunition, Native women began digging tunnels to take out larger amounts of lead. This disrupted the land's surface.	Europeans and U.S. citizens wanted lead for lead shot to use in guns, and in making roofs, gutters, weights, toys, printers' type, and paint. This led to Europeans and U.S. citizens to move onto Native people's land to mine lead. Europeans and U.S. citizens wanted to make money by mining galena and producing lead.
Conflict over lead led to battles between Ho-Chunk and Europeans. One of the Ho-Chunk leaders, Red Bird, killed several Europeans who settled on Ho-Chunk lands without permission. He also attacked a barge carrying miners. Red Bird was jailed and died in jail.	By the 1820s, most of the galena found on the surface of the land was gone. Europeans prepared mining shafts several hundred feet down, mining pits as large as 20 feet deep and 20 feet wide, and built smelters to melt down the galena and make it into lead. Thousands and thousands of mining pits disrupted the land's surface across southwestern Wisconsin.	

<p>The United States government put pressure on the Ho-Chunk to give up some of their galena-rich land, but the Ho-Chunk discovered the government wanted all their lands that held galena.</p>	<p>When lead miners melted down galena, they released sulphur into the air, which smells like rotten eggs. This polluted the air around the smelters.</p>	
	<p>As European and European American miners began to mine year round, small communities and towns, such as New Diggings and Mineral Point, were created to accommodate the miners' needs. These communities and towns disrupted the physical landscape.</p>	
	<p>Sometimes miners dug a hole in the side of a hill and lived in dens or caves reached through the holes. These were called dug-outs, which minimally disrupted the physical landscape. The nickname "Badgers" came from miners burrowing holes in hills to live like badgers did.</p>	