

2. Uranium

a. History

"It is possible that Indians in Northwest New Mexico used uranium minerals as a pigment for hundreds of years. However, the discovery of uranium in New Mexico is credited to a Navajo sheepherder named Paddy Martinez. Martinez was always on the alert for bits of brightly colored or unusual rock, and one day in 1950 he picked up a uranium bearing rock in the vicinity of Haystack Mesa near Grants. When he took the rock to a friend in Grants to determine what the rock was, the ore was discovered to contain uranium. That chance discovery brought Paddy Martinez a lifetime stipend from the Santa Fe Railway, which owned land in the area, and it led to major exploration programs that revealed the most prolific uranium production district in the world.

The first production of uranium was shipped to the Atomic Energy Commission's buying station at Monticello, Utah. Later exploration and development of uranium outcrops brought about the establishment of an AEC buying station and limestone treatment mill built by the Anaconda Company at Bluewater in 1952. In 1951, a major dis-