

The Lightweight Aggregate Producers Association is a trade association representing 13 United States producers of sintered clay, shale, and fly ash for use as a lightweight aggregate. Its members operate 14 plants in 9 states, employ several hundred people, and annually produce 2,400,000 tons of lightweight aggregate worth \$13,200,000.

The National Slag Association is a trade association representing 9 sellers of expanded slag for use as a lightweight aggregate. Its members operate 12 plants in 9 states, employ several hundred more people, and annually market 2,450,000 tons of lightweight aggregate worth \$7,250,000.

We are attaching to this statement a listing of our members and the locations of their plants. Together they account for approximately 85 percent of domestic production of expanded shale, clay, and slate aggregates, approximately 95 percent of domestic sales of slag aggregates, and roughly two-thirds of domestic production of all light-weight aggregates.

The lightweight aggregate industry

Aggregate is the material that is added to cement or a similar adhesive to make concrete. Sand, gravel, and crushed stone are used as aggregate in the making of heavier grades of concrete. Lighter grades of concrete require a lightweight aggregate. These lighter grades enjoy obvious advantages in large-scale construction projects and have achieved general acceptance for that use, particularly in the form of concrete blocks. The market for light aggregates derives directly from the demand thus generated for lightweight concrete.

Lightweight aggregates are invariably low-priced bulk minerals. Expanded shale, clay, and slate are produced by burning certain types of raw shale, clay or slate in rotary kilns or sintering them on traveling plates. The burned or sintered raw material expands to as much as several times its original size without any increase in weight and thus becomes suitable for use as lightweight aggregate.

Slag is a byproduct of the iron blast furnace process. When molten slag is expanded with controlled applications of water, it too is suitable for use as lightweight aggregate. Other lightweight aggregates include coal cinders, vermiculite, perlite, and pumice.

Pumice is a glass-like form of cooled volcanic lava which is light in weight because it is full of minute cavities caused by expanding volcanic gases that become entrapped when the lava suddenly cooled. Limited quantities of pumice are mined in some of our own western states. Recently, however, floods of imported pumice, primarily from Greece and Italy, have been pouring into our eastern seaboard markets for lightweight aggregate. Impeded by no tariff barrier at all—the pumice we are concerned with comes in duty-free—this imported pumice is making sudden and deep inroads in cities and localities near several eastern ports.

Our member firms and the people who work for them find their businesses and their jobs threatened. We come to seek relief from this threat.

The development of the pumice aggregate threat

During the 1950's and before, little pumice entered the United States from abroad, and most of what did was intended for use as an abrasive. Some pumice still is brought for this purpose, and to this day pumice is classified among the abrasives in the Tariff Schedules of the United States. The Tariff Act of 1930 originally subjected the type of pumice which primarily concerns us to a duty of 0.1 cent per pound. By 1956, however, trade agreement concessions had lowered the duty to 0.0425 cent per pound.

Meanwhile, in the late forties and early fifties, domestic pumice in small quantities and imported pumice in even smaller quantities began to be employed as a lightweight aggregate. The domestic pumice all comes from western mines and processing plants. Then as now, transportation costs made it unavailable east of the Mississippi. Then as now, all or almost all imported pumice entered through the eastern seaboard and was marketed only in the East. Then, however, most such pumice imports came to Florida ports for use within that state. They were not a significant factor in any larger lightweight-aggregate market.

In 1959 a special law was enacted for the benefit of Florida importers and concrete block producers eliminating the tariff on "pumice stone to be used in the manufacture of masonry products such as building blocks, bricks, tiles and similar forms."¹ (Now Item 519.05, United States Tariff Schedules Annotated.)

¹ Public Law 86-325, 73 Stat. 596 (1959).