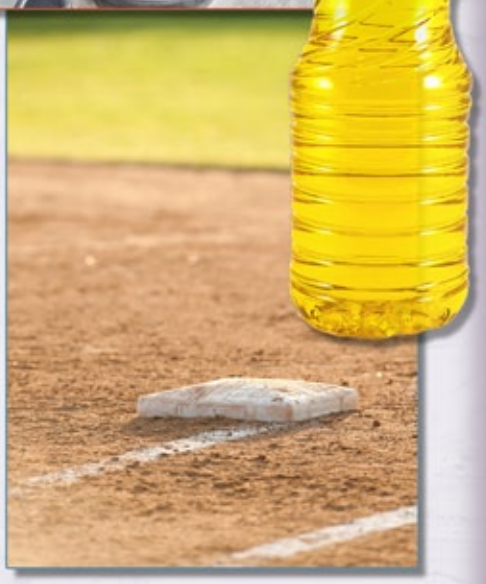
# ILLINOIS' mining... Fuller's Earth

**Fuller's earth** is a non-plastic, absorbent clay mineral found in Pulaski County. It is also found in many other states and countries. Absorbent clays have been mined since biblical times. It was used by "fullers" who kneaded the clay and water into raw wool to absorb the naturally occurring oil, lanolin. They also rubbed it into wool fabric to clean it and remove colors. The use of detergents has replaced this process.

The first known mining of Fuller's earth in Illinois occurred in 1920 by Sinclair Refining. Today absorbent clays are used in a wide variety of products and types of manufacturing. These include oil absorbents for floor care in factories and automotive shops and for kitty litter. Fuller's earth is also used to decolor and purify mineral oil and vegetable oils. The clay is also currently used to purify jet fuel, biodiesel, motor oil, recycled used motor oil and many other lubricants.



Fuller's earth clays are used as carriers for fertilizers and pesticides and are used in the pelleting of animal feeds and medicines. It is also used as a facial skin treatment.

These absorbent clays are also used as a conditioner for baseball fields for faster drying after rain.

Illinois Department of Natural Resources

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