

Precision essential

There's a little bit of Marmora in a lot of filing cabinets all over North America—if not the world. Those photo-copied letters and documents that have become so essential to business communication are made possible by a little-known product that has been produced in the village since last November.

The product resembles finely ground black pepper and is simply precision-ground magnetite ore.

In a process that begins in Marmora, the ore ends up as the carrier of the developer used in dry photo-copying machines. To accomplish this, it must have two essentials: It must be magnetic and it must be uniform in size.

Wilks and Poole Company, located in the old Fisher Stove building on Victoria Street, performs the first step in the magnetite's journey to the photo-copying machines.

The company's source of raw material—magnetite ore—is the Indusmin Mine at Nephton. Indusmin produces nepheline syenite for the ceramics industry and magnetite is an unwanted by-product.

But Wilks and Poole want the magnetite (a form of iron ore) for its natural magnetic properties and because it can be precision ground within tight tolerances.

The Wilks and Poole organization is a partnership between Dr. Phil Wilks and John Poole of Manchester, New Hampshire. Marmora is the site of its preliminary processing plant because it is close to the source of a suitable supply of magnetite.

Five or six years ago the only known source of a suitable supply of magnetite was Sweden. The New Hampshire operation had to import the heavy ore and could expect to get only about 30 per cent finished product from the imported ore. Transportation costs were inordinately heavy.

Through a program of sampling all known iron ore deposits in the area, the Nephton source was discovered and Wilks and Poole was established in Marmora.

The ore is trucked in from Nephton—about 150 tons a month—and about 40 tons of finished product is shipped from Marmora to Manchester each month. This saves moving two-thirds of material that will be wasted any great distance.

The function of the Marmora operation is to reduce the magnetite ore to a uniform size and to remove all non-magnetic material down to .01 per cent.

The size of the sandy granules is critical. They must be between 170 and 230 mesh, or 0.0029 inches in diameter.

When this is accomplished, through a series of mills, screens, dryers and sifters, the tiny pellets (with no more than .05 per cent dust) are packed in steel drums and trucked to Manchester by a Madoc trucking firm.

At this stage the material is known as "torch feed stock". Upon arrival in New Hampshire the stock is fed through "plasma torches", invented by Dr. Wilks. This process melts the surface of the tiny pieces of magnetite and produces what can most understandably be called millions of miniature magnetite ball bearings.

These are then lightly plastic coated and are ready to be used in photo-copying machines.

The Wilks and Poole Marmora plant has been in operation since last November. Employed are four full-time and two part-time workers in two shifts.

In charge of the operation is Cody Wheeler, general manager, who is a veteran of the local mining scene. He was with the Marmora Mine for 21 years as an Engineering Associate and then seven years as Test Site Superintendent with Joy Manufacturing Company, testing prototype mining machinery in the Madoc area.

May move to Hazelock shortly

Iron ore processing industry locates in Marmora

Marmora has a new, small, industry that should be getting underway in the next few months.

Wilks and Poole will be an iron ore processing plant located in the former Fisher Stoves factory on Victoria St. at Highway 7.

According to Wilks and Poole General Manager J. Cody Wheeler, the company will process iron from the Nephon plant north of Hazelock, screening it and magnetically separating it from the waste. The ore will then be shipped to Wilks

Poole's parent company in the United States where it will undergo further pro-

cessing before it is eventually used in photocopy developer.

Mr. Wheeler emphasizes that this is as yet a very small, and very new opera-

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tion. "There probably won't be more than three or four people employed here although it could develop into something more. It's far too early to tell," Mr. Wheeler said. "We're just starting to get our machinery in and we'll be setting up over the next month or two." Mr. Wheeler was reluctant to talk about the operation for that reason and, because, even before he had received any press exposure, they've "already had people in here asking about jobs. And we don't really have that many."

How long the plant will remain in Marmora is another question. At a recent meeting of Hazelock council it was revealed that there are plans for the firm to build its own plant in Hazelock in the spring. Hazelock can presumably be on a better site, with a building tailored to its needs and closer to the Nephon mine.

However, Mr. Wheeler said that is not necessarily the case. "We'll have to see how things go here. We'll have to see what results we get, if there's a drainage problem around this plant, what deals we can make...I just couldn't say at this time."