

Dicalite Plant Has World for a Market

Rounding out 23 years of operation in Torrance this year is the Dicalite Division of the Great Lakes Carbon Corp. whose 300-acre dicalite mining operation is located in the hills above Waverly.

The 140 employees of the company mine and process the diatomaceous earth known as diatomite and send it to markets in practically every country of the world.

The local company is headed by D. L. Marlett, vice-president and general manager; Edward A. Harris, operations manager; D. P. Dyrsmid, chief engineer; A. K. Muir, plant superintendent; and John J. Graham, assistant superintendent.

Among the products manufactured from the valuable earth are filteraids, fillers, insulating materials, extender pigments, absorbents, admixtures for concrete, and others.

The basic material of the Dicalite firm are Diatoms, a microscopic aquatic plant possessing mobility, which have existed for geologic ages.

These minute organisms are so tiny that a high-power microscope must be used to observe them. Their structure is a veritable work of art, with designs wrought in intricate lines and patterns. In complexity and variety of types, they are similar to snowflakes; over ten thousand different types have been classified.

The two main classifications are: Marine and freshwater. Marine types exist to this day in the salt water of seas and oceans, where they have a valuable function in providing food for other plants and organisms, including shellfish, mammals, fishes, and the like. Because of this they are often called "the grass of the sea."

Freshwater types are also found today in abundance in semi-stagnant lakes and streams, contributing to the typical appearance of such bodies of water. Although widely distributed throughout the world, diatoms seem to thrive best in very cold waters and are now abundant in arctic seas and lakes.

Marine diatoms flourished in the region which is now Southern California, when it was under the sea. Their remains settled to the ocean bottom and formed immense deposits of diatomaceous silica. An idea of the size of these deposits can be gained from the fact that one of the theories regarding the origin of California's rich oil fields is that each tiny plant contributed a minute drop of oil from its organic matter being converted to oil by the processes of nature. These deposits extend from the area of Laguna in the south to the area of Monterey in the north, and their formation is variously estimated at 3,000,000 to 10,000,000 years in the past.

Freshwater diatoms formed deposits in the more recent period of volcanic activity—possibly as late as 100,000 years ago—in the western portion of the United States. Volcanic lava flows dammed rivers to form lakes in which the diatoms flourished. Eventually the rivers cut

through the lava dams, leaving the deposits high and dry. Most extensive of the freshwater deposits are located in Washington, Oregon, and Nevada.

In appearance, exposures of diatomaceous silica resemble chalk, but chemically there is considerable difference. Unlike most living things, diatoms have a skeleton made up of silicon dioxide, chemically a very inert substance. Common sand has a similar composition, with, of course, a very different physical structure.

There are three general types of "Dicalite" products: "Natural," which has been dried, milled and air classified; "Calcined," which has been dried, milled, subjected to high temperature burning, and air classified; "Process Calcined," or "White," which has been dried, milled, subjected to high temperature fluxing, and air classified.

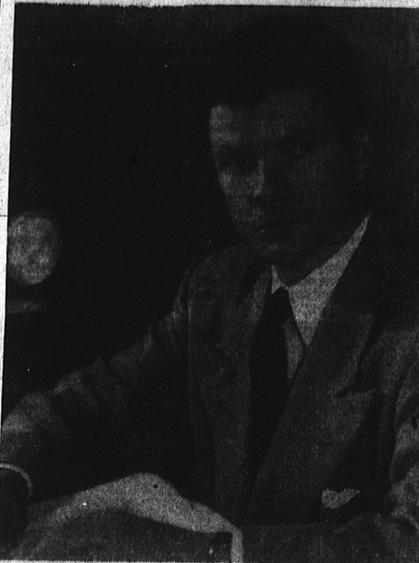
While these products are utilized to produce items ranging from silver polish to streptomycin, the new wonder drug, the major uses are as filteraids to speed up the clarification of food products, pharmaceuticals, chemicals, etc.; as insulating materials for high temperature use around boilers, furnaces, etc.; as paper aids, where small amounts added like a filler speed production and improve quality and appearance; as a flattening and extender pigment for paints, varnishes and other protective coatings; and as general fillers in making many products. Actually, specific uses include practically every field of industrial endeavor.

Among the city's leading industries during the past five years has been the National Electric Products Corp., whose plant at 2750 W. Lomita Blvd., manufactures roughing-in electrical material for new construction throughout the 11 western states.

The manufacturing space of the plant covers 131,000 square feet and sits on 27 acres, according to A. D. Freshman, works manager.

The firm employs 118 persons here in the manufacturing of thinwall conduit, rigid conduit, and Flexsteel conduit. The plant was established in March, 1948. R. G. Holabird is the regional western sales manager.

Employees of the company have been active in civic affairs in Torrance, with the encouragement of their plant managers. They have fielded a championship softball team here to compete in the city's summer softball leagues.



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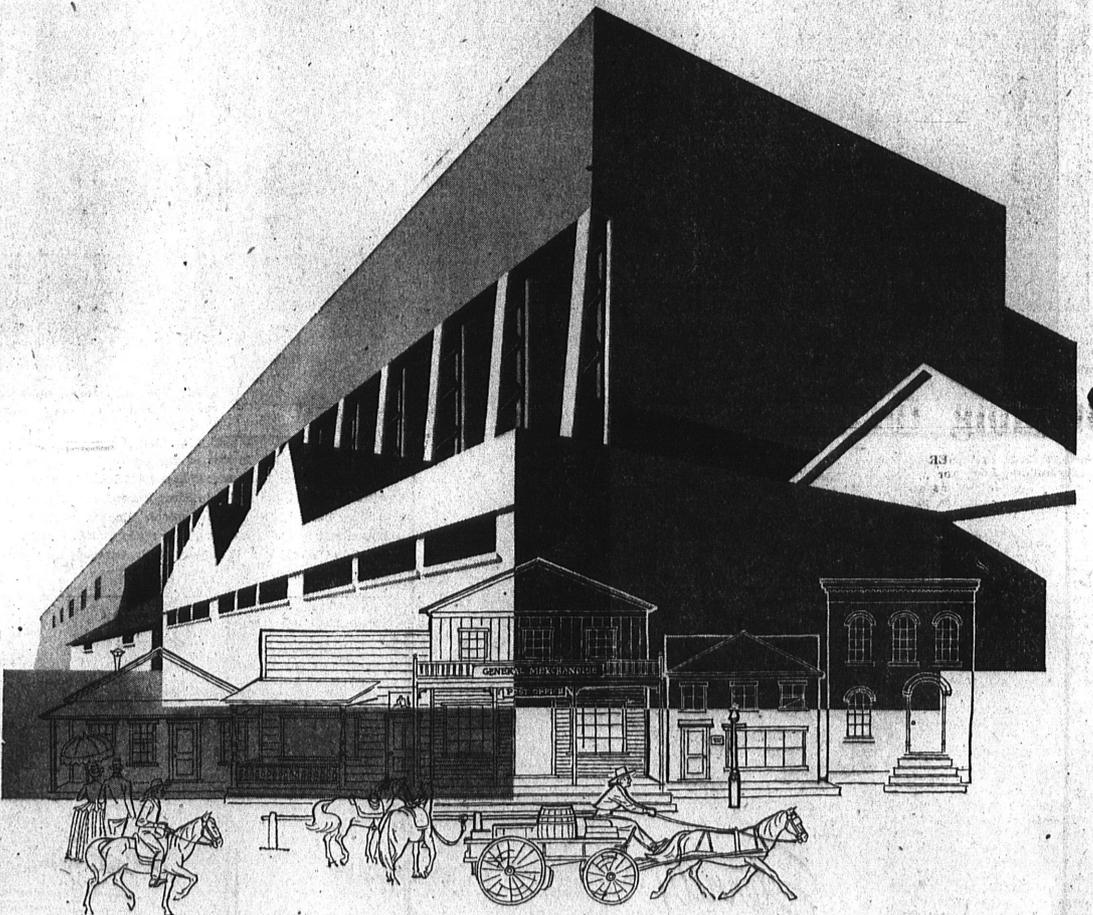
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- a hearty "well done"

to the citizens of Torrance on their 41st anniversary . . . from National Electric Products Corporation.

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