

INDUSTRY IS IMPORTANT TO COMMUNITY  
Pine City's 3M plant unique in nation

The clean white building is scarcely noticeable to strangers and only small blue signs on either side identify it to passersby. Yet, the 3-M plant is vitally important to the economy of Pine City.

"When the plant originally opened in 1968 they employed 38 persons," plant manager Matt Alexander said.

Five key men, Bob Bope, Matt Alexander, Tim Elder, Jim Ryan, and Len Anderson ~~er-er-e-~~ were on hand to get things rolling.

Few people realize the Pine City 3M plant is unique in that it is the only one of its kind in the United States. It is a complete microfilm system supplier. The product manufactured here is shipped around the world.

"One reason we decided to locate here is because there was a building with 12,000 square feet available. This was adequate for our microfilm card operations," plant manager Matt Alexander said.

Large companies look toward rural locations because raw materials such as power and water are usually more readily available. Land costs are cheaper and usually taxes are lower. ~~h-a-~~ Labor stability is also a factor and outdoor recreational availability for employees is a consideration.

3M has a policy of making all of its employees feel like part of the organization. Attitude and enthusiasm bind them together with 3M men and women everywhere.

The Pine City plant is non-union although other plants throughout the country are union. The local plant has a very small turnover in employees.

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Since coming to Pine City it is estimated the 3M plant has generated over a million dollars to be re-spent in the community.

In 1973 the company purchased land to expand. The intention was to build a separate plant for film ~~welding~~ coding. The present building would continue to operate as it is. Due to the recession that hit in 1974, ~~the plan~~ a moratorium was placed on the building of all new plants and administrative buildings.

Alexander gave a brief history of 3M.

It all began in Two Harbors in 1902. Five enterprising businessmen, two railroaders, a physician, a meat-market operator and an attorney, joined forces to exploit the discovery of a mineral they thought was corundum.

It seemed just the thing to sell to eastern manufacturers of grinding wheels. Unfortunately, they found the mineral was not what they thought it was but also discovered there was a terrific market for sandpaper.

The firm moved to Duluth and converted an old flour mill into a sandpaper factory. A sandpaper-making expert was hired. The Duluth ~~exp~~ operation floundered and the man that financially saved them insisted the plant be moved to St. Paul where he could keep an eye on the operation.

Through experimentation and study, a new abrasive cloth made with an artificial mineral, aluminum oxide, was developed. The result was "Three-M-Lite, a coated abrasive that is still in the 3M line.

The company's most famous "Scotch" brand trademark is believed to have had its origin with an angry auto body painter in the mid 1920's who, having trouble with the adhesion of an early roll of

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masking tape noticed the two inch wide roll had adhesive only on the edges.

He told the salesman, "Take this tape back to your stingy Scotch bosses and tell them to put more adhesive on it."

Whether the first batch of tape stuck or not, the name certainly did.

What began as a quest for quality in one product line has grown to include an assembly of technical talent which could staff science departments at several good sized universities.

The famous "Thinsulate" insulation for thermal outwear was developed by 3M. Unlike foam or goose down which tends to compress and lose trapped air, the 3M product does not. The insulation also resists shifting, separating, balling and matting.

A 3M program called Pollution Prevention Pays was initiated to encourage and recognize individual technical efforts which eliminate or reduce pollution from manufacturing products and processes.

In 1977 a share of 3M stock purchased in 1919 for 50 cents would have grown through splits to 384 shares and would have been worth \$19,000.

From Australia to Oslo, from Sao Paulo to St. Paul, to Pine City, 3M people help set the rhythms of business, commerce and industry.

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