

A.P. Green aids the search for gold

Acton's A.P. Green Refractories plays an important part in the quest for gold and silver.

A.P. Green makes crucibles which help determine the content of gold or silver in a particular mine.

The firm moved to Acton from Toronto in 1950 to make use of a tunnel kiln which was sitting idle in a vacant building on Perth Street. A devastating fire in 1952 forced A.P. Green Refractories to work out of the Smith and Stone building in Georgetown for six months, plant manager Orval Chapman recalls.

A.P. Green now employs 18 people in a building which operates 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

Crucibles are an important

part of the search for precious metals such as gold and silver, Mr. Chapman explained.

For example, gold samples from a mine are ground up into a powder form. That powder is then placed in a crucible with chemicals. The crucible and its contents are then placed in a furnace where they are exposed to 2,000 degrees F temperatures. The contents turn to liquid. A glass substance which forms is then removed and the contents are placed into a cylinder and burned again. All the lead is soaked out of the fluid and then allowed to cool. The beads of gold are then analyzed to determine the grade of the metal.

A.P. Green supplies crucibles for the Royal Canadian Mint in

Ottawa, says Mr. Chapman.

The company turns out two to three million crucibles a year. But crucibles aren't the only product the company makes. Fire Brick, about 50 tonnes a week, is another product of the refractory. Fire bricks are used in steel plants, foundries and fireplaces. A.P. Green also makes fire brick rings for insulation used at Smith and Stone. Combustion chambers for furnaces are also made at A.P. Green, said Mr. Chapman.

The chambers are used by fur-

nace makers throughout Canada and many are the most efficient chambers made, he said.

And the growing demand for waterless toilets is giving A.P. Green more business, said Mr. Chapman. Waterless toilets use propane to burn the contents and the combustion chamber made by A.P. Green is so efficient it easily passes the tough California restrictions, said Mr. Chapman.

A.P. Green competes with companies in the United States, Japan, and Australia. The firm's

products are sold in Canada, the U.S., Belgium and Central America.

Mr. Chapman doesn't expect free trade to have a huge effect on the firm. A.P. Green is competitive with American companies and many refractory products are crossing the border tax-free now, he said.

Mr. Chapman says the firm must stay on top of changes in technology to stay competitive and he has high hopes for the refractory firm in the 1990s.



Orval Chapman (left) examines one of the crucibles ready for the kiln while Paul Blake of Georgetown makes the forms at A.P. Green Refractories in Acton. The crucibles are used to examine gold content in mines. (Herald photo)



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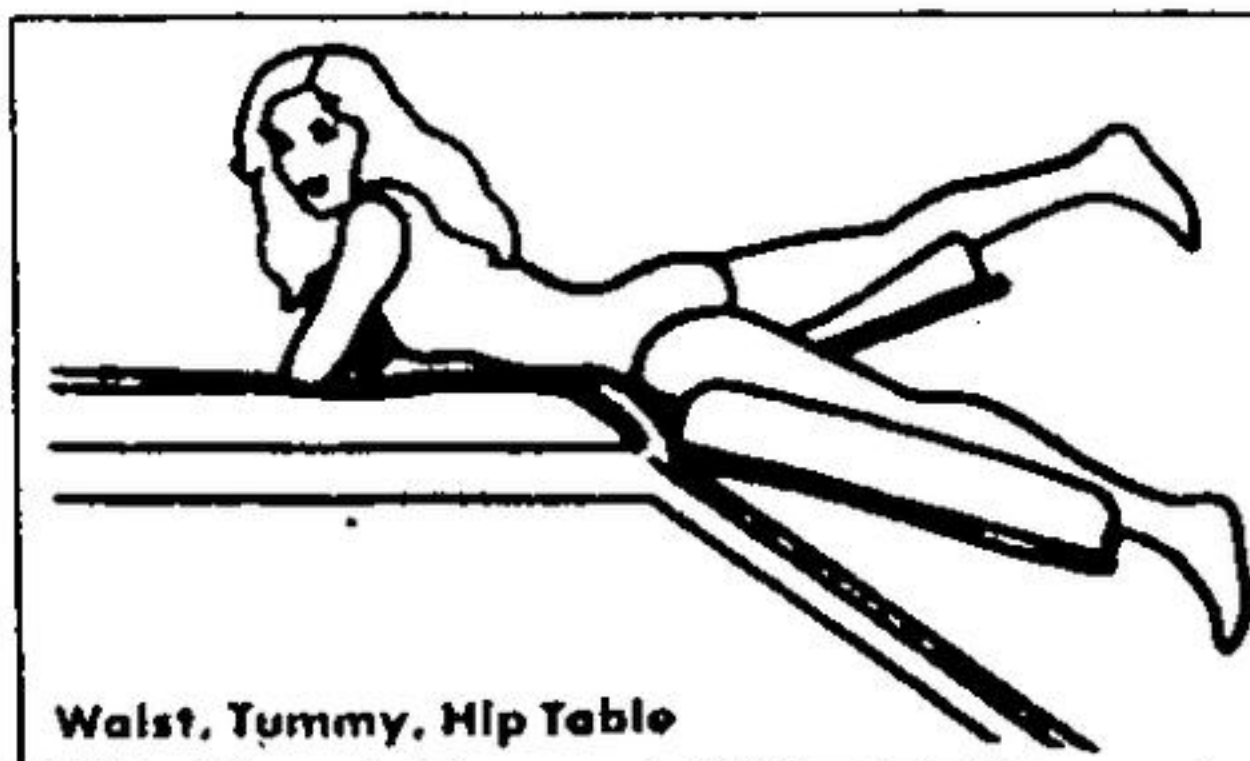
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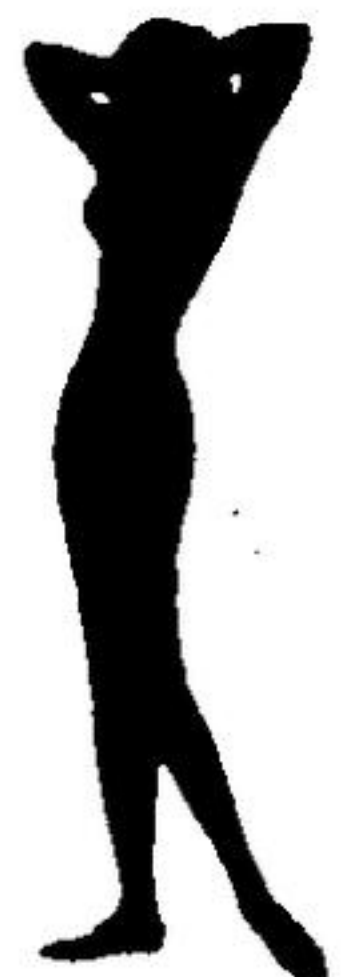
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