

# FOOD PROCESSING —

## A MANITOWOC TRIUMPH

BY EDWARD EHLERT

Food has always been one of the basic needs of man. Clothing and shelter are the other two. While the good earth always has produced food abundantly, man has not solved the problem of food preservation so that the abundance could be distributed over 365 days of a year. In the Encyclopaedia Britannica there is this statement: "The greatest of all inventions in history is food canning, which reduced man's dependence on the annual and local harvest."

It was during the reign of Napoleon of France in 1795, that a prize of 12,000 francs was offered to the person who would discover a sure method of preserving food. It was not until 1809 that one came forward with a plan to preserve food in jars and jugs and then boiling these in water for a long time. This man was Nicholas Appert, a French confectioner. Imperfect as Appert's invention was, it nevertheless became the foundation for the present day canning industry.

In 1810 an Englishman, one Peter Durand, patented the idea of an improved container for foods, made of tin-coated metal, similar to canisters, a metal container filled with broken metal fragments or bullets used in warfare and discharged from the small cannon of that day. From this word "canister" later came the shorter word "can," and also canning, cannery, canner, etc. However, the general use of metal containers did not take hold for many years.

Commercial canning came to America in 1819 when William Underwood, an Englishman, became an immigrant. He settled in Boston. It is not known when he began his trade; however, in 1822 he was selling fruits and berries in glass containers. Quinces, currants, barberries and cranberries were the principal articles so treated in the first few years. The great problem in the early years was to get sufficient glass jars. He complained about losing most of a season's work from lack of jars and bottles. Soon tomatoes were added to the list of food thus preserved, then lobsters were packed. Incidentally, lobsters were sold at \$4.50 per dozen jars



of quart size.

In 1839 the first tin cans appeared. The method of making them was primitive and slow. A good workman could make about 60 cans a day. Every part of this operation was done by hand, with the various parts cut out with a tin shears according to patterns previously made up.

However, the food processing industry in those days was beset with problems. From a letter written in 1850 this complaint is expressed:

"The season ending last year has been a very strange one, and some of our hermetically sealed goods have spoiled; although they were put up with great care and of the best quality, we can only suspect that the whole atmosphere has been impregnated with cholera that acted upon animal matter as well as on vegetable matter. Our process has been the same for a number of years, with the exception of a little more care in that process last year than heretofore, because we have known of others who had the same problem. We wish you to be very particular and not suffer any of our hermetically sealed goods to go out of your hands until you have opened a few packages of each case."

It was in 1857 that Louis Pasteur in France discovered that it was bacteria that was the cause of the trouble, and that it was also basic to the problems

experienced in food processing. The discovery was a boon to canners, although the implications of it, and its implementation took several more decades.

It seems that wars always are the impetus to greater progress. The Civil War was no exception. There was need for great quantities of canned foods, far beyond the very limited capacity of existing establishments, for most plants could turn out only a few thousand cans a day. In those days it took five or six hours of time to process food for canning. Effort was concentrated on cutting down the time needed for boiling the food. Chemicals were added to hasten the process. However, other problems developed since the food was discolored thereby and the resulting product looked anything but attractive. The "closed kettle" method of processing food was then adopted, together with other innovations. Live steam and "super-heated water" were the heating agents.

The food processing industry in the early years was confined to the cities along the eastern seacoast. There were only a few canning ventures in the mid-west. Van Camps, in 1861, in Indianapolis, began packing fruits and vegetables in five gallon cans which were peddled to retail grocers, who in turn opened these containers and sold their contents by the pint or quart. In 1868 Van Camps began



to pack in more conventional sized cans.

There were canneries in Illinois, Michigan, and Iowa in the 1870's. However, food processing did not come to Wisconsin until 1887. Fred A. Stare, the author of the book entitled "The Story of Wisconsin's Great Canning Industry," said, "Once we got started, true to our motto, 'Forward,' we really went to town." This fact is made apparent when we realize that after twenty-seven years in the canning business, in 1907, more peas were packed in Wisconsin than in any other state.

#### Albert Landreth Comes to Manitowoc

The Landreth family had been engaged in growing garden seeds in the vicinity of Philadelphia for over a hundred years. The Landreth's originally came from England. The eastern canners depended upon this family to supply them with sufficient seeds for their canning operations. When available land became scarce in the east, the senior Landreth decided to send his son, Albert, west to Wisconsin to engage in the growing of peas for seed on the virgin soil of that state. He had heard that the soil was rich and well suited to the production of this crop. Albert Landreth came here some time in the seventies. As he engaged in the work for which he had been sent he thought that if Manitowoc County could raise seed from peas, why could not the canning operation be done here as well? It was a completely logical deduction; however, there was no one west of New York State who had ever attempted such a venture.

It was in 1883 that Albert Landreth began experimenting with the canning of green peas in the kitchen of the hotel, which was owned by his mother-in-law, Mrs. Hoes. This hotel was located on the site of the present Lakeside Packing Company in Manitowoc. A year later he put up a small commercial pack, possibly several hundred cans, doing everything by hand, even to the making of the tin cans. This was continued for two more years, still doing all the work by hand, but no doubt in increasing volume.

In 1887 Mr. Landreth built and equipped his first canning plant and the first pack of peas was put up. This plant was equipped with a filling machine, a tray filler which poured the peas slowly into a dozen cans at a time through the 1-3/8" hole in the cap. Whole cans of that period were closed by soldering a cap of tin over the hole. This type of can was used until 1916. Cans were purchased from Norton Brothers at Maywood, Illinois. This company later became known as the American Can Company. Seventy-five acres of land were leased to meet the

needs for canning in 1889.

The Lakeside label was first used in 1887, and was copyrighted four years later.

In 1890 the demand for peas was so good that Mr. Landreth found it advisable to build an additional plant at Sheboygan. The plant was located there because land could be procured, and there was labor available for the seasonal force that was needed. The peas were picked by hand which required hundreds and even thousands of field hands. With the crude machinery of that day most of the factory work was hand work. This required far more employees for a given output than a food processing plant now requires. Sheboygan was chosen as the site of the second place since the supervision required could be given from the Manitowoc plant. Harold Landreth, a brother of Albert, became the manager of the Sheboygan plant. They owned this plant until 1907 when it was sold to Charles Gillett.

The canning industry was a seasonal industry. Mr. Landreth brought in a man named James L. Brooks, a nephew, who gradually took over more and more of the responsibilities of management. Mr. Landreth spent his winters in Florida, but was always back in Manitowoc to help in the operation of the plant during the summer and fall. He acquired an estate in Clearwater, Florida, and it was there that he died on April 15, 1899, at the age of only 41 years.

#### College of Agriculture Cooperates

The first application of science to the canning industry in Wisconsin, and so far

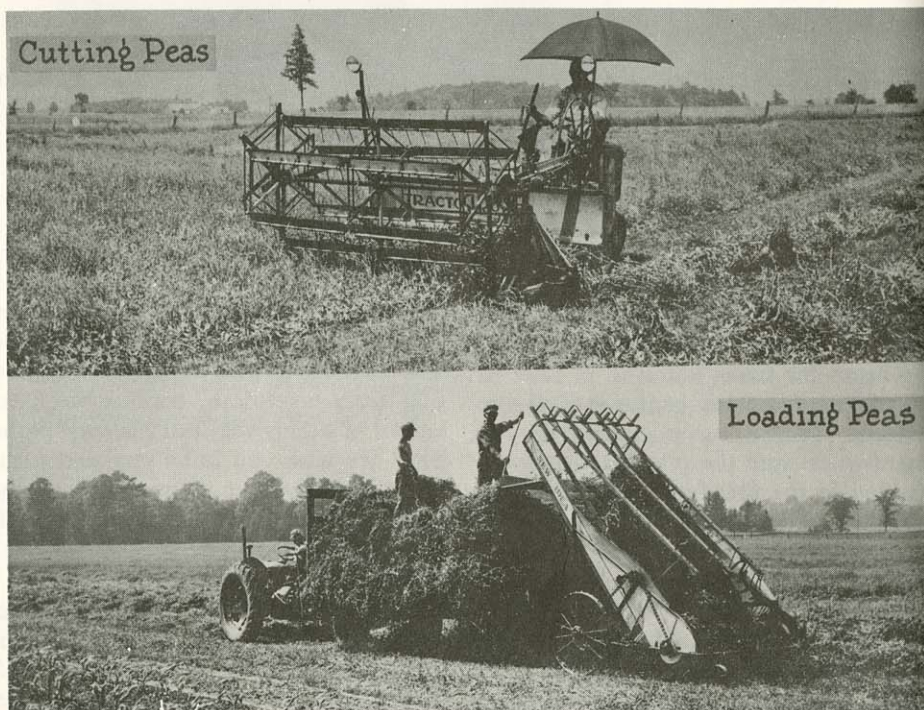
as is known, in the United States, was in 1894, when, responding to a call for help, the University of Wisconsin College of Agriculture sent Dr. H.L. Russell, then 28 years of age, to Manitowoc where the Albert Landreth Company was experiencing excessive spoilage. (Dr. Russell later became the Dean of the College of Agriculture. Old time rural residents will remember his name, for it was a by-word among farmers in the first several decades of this century.)

Dr. Russell found living organisms in the contents of the spoiled cans and therefore concluded that either the time of process or the temperature or both were insufficient. Over the protest of the processor, a series of test batches were run off and a safe process was worked out, after which the spoilage dropped to a low figure.

#### Land Leased or Rented from Farms For Growing Peas

The Wisconsin Canner, a trade magazine, on April 22, 1897, had this article about the farming, harvesting, and canning of peas in the Albert Landreth plant at Manitowoc:

"Some eight or ten years ago (1887-9) an enterprising man thought he saw in the conditions an opening for the industry of canning peas while still in a green state and forthwith embarked in it in a small tentative way, gradually developing it until now it is one of the leading industries of Manitowoc. Landless himself, he rented land from the farmers, the rental increasing as the farmer caught on to the profitability of the new business, until now the regular rental for the use of the land





is ten dollars per acre. As the business grew, a duplicate establishment was put into operation at Sheboygan, 25 miles to the south. Seven hundred acres of land within a radius of four miles of that city are this year pea farmed by the proprietor of Lakeside.

The patches vary in size from two to ten acres, are planted so as to give continuous arriving of picking conditions that engage the small army of pickers from about the 20th of June until late in September. The pea fields present an interesting picture during the picking season. Women and children are employed. Like lines of men in regiments they move slowly across the field, gathering into baskets as they go until the two lines meet in the center and the field is cleaned. Meantime back of the line the filled baskets are being carried to the center where they are emptied into bags, and a ticket received in exchange, which is good for the price of a bushel's picking at the office."

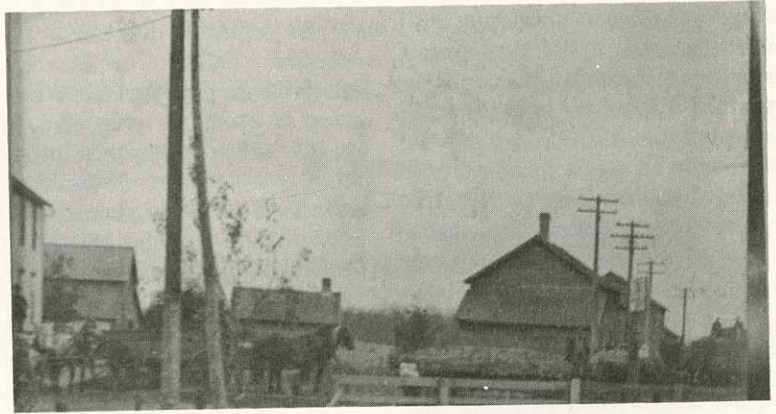
The article describes also a "great cloth-covered cylinder" that revolves rapidly with pea pods carried round and round by the arms of the beater that revolves in the inside in a direction opposite to that of the cylinder. Of course, there were bruised peas from this operation. This necessitated that the peas be carried to a long table where girls with deft fingers and quick eyes, worked over the peas, and culled out the bruised ones, and those other foreign materials that might have been taken from the field.

The Wisconsin Canner indicates that the company in 1895 produced 50,000 cases of peas. They were still filling cans by hand in 1897. The "new-fangled" pea viners had found their way into Wisconsin; however this company had not yet seen fit to pick peas in this manner.

#### Wisconsin Values Canning Industry Highly

Pea packing had become one of the important industries of northeastern Wisconsin, a large part of which was excellently adapted to the growing of peas of the finest quality. The completion of a large pea canning plant at Sturgeon Bay, made six big factories in that section of the state, the others being located at Green Bay, Kewaunee, Fond du Lac and Manitowoc, the latter having two factories. The quality of the peas was equal to any packed, no matter where.

The editor of "The Canner" remarked specifically about the Landreth canning operation, "One of the interesting features of the western canned goods business is the recent shipment to Scotland of several cases of Lakeside peas. These goods have opened the eyes of the "Scottish Chief,"



Loading Sugar Beets at Newton in 1909

to the flavor and tenderness of the American pea canned in its most perfect form, something entirely new to the average European consumer of peas who are fed up with the colored French article."

That Manitowoc was very appreciative of this enterprising industry in its midst we see in this new article: "The old timers active in the last decade of the 19th century remember the hard times that began about 1894 and continued until about 1900 when unemployment was widespread and a man was considered fortunate if he had a job that paid \$1.00 a day for a ten-hour day. This writer went through it, doing whatever kind of work could be had, between corn canning seasons, teaching country school in Iowa for \$25.00 a month, (and paying \$10 of this for room and board) and finally in October, 1898, went all the way from Iowa to Maine in search of something better. The Landreth Canning Company in Manitowoc furnishes work to people who need it so badly, besides giving to farmers a market for the cash crops that they grow."

#### The Pea Louse

The pea aphid or louse is an old timer in the Wisconsin canning industry. The first appearance of this insect is unknown; however, it is known that in 1900 there was an invasion of almost "epidemic" proportions. It was reported that under one of the pea viners there was a solid mass of crawling and squirming insects an inch thick or more. On July 31, 1900 someone at the Manitowoc Pea Packing Company wrote this letter: "Dear Sir: Replying to yours of the 30th asking for facts regarding the pea louse, will say that it has put in its appearance here and has completely covered all the fields. We have only noticed it in the last week, and at the present writing it is impossible to state to what extent the crop will be

damaged. They seem to be increasing in number, and some of them seem to be dying off, but others take their place so rapidly that on the whole the increase seems to have been about 200% in the last four or five days. The weather has been dry and warm, but still not hot enough to affect them."

The Albert Landreth Company wrote this letter also on July 31, 1900: "Dear Sir: We are sorry to say that the pea louse has certainly affected our crops very badly. Our late crops will all be destroyed, and our pack will probably be about 50% of what we expected it to be."

One of the ways to avert damage by the pea aphids was suggested in an article in the Wisconsin Canner in April 1901. We quote: "The pea canners of Manitowoc and vicinity have decided to head off the destructive pea fly this year by opening the planting season two weeks earlier than usual. They are evidently figuring that the pesky bug will be caught napping."

Incidentally, in 1901 there was no trouble with the pea aphid. However, there was only a short canning season, apparently due to a reduced acreage of peas.

Another experiment by the Landreth Company tried that year was one involving diversification of its crops. Fifty acres were planted to snap beans from which they did some experimental packing. They reported that it was a very successful and profitable venture.

#### Progress in the Canning Industry by 1902

The Canners of the United States had their national convention in Milwaukee in 1902. A Milwaukee newspaper wrote this summary of the convention and progress in food processing up to that time: "The canning industry of the United States which is represented in Milwaukee this week by between 300 and 400 of the



alert and progressive men who are at its head, is almost wholly a development of the period since the Civil War. Before that time about the only canned goods were oysters and sardines — and the latter were imported from abroad. Tons of vegetables went to waste in all parts of this country because they could not be used before they spoiled, and many delicacies now universally enjoyed could then be had only within a limited distance from their places of origin. The first experiment in canned goods, after oysters, was made by the lobster packers. Then came canned salmon, then tomatoes, then English plum-pudding and Boston baked beans. After that the deluge. There is hardly anything eatable which is not put up in cans, and wherever the advance guard of civilization pushes its way, through the jungles of Africa, or across the snowy steppes of Russia, or where the wide and rushing Yukon washes over gold-bearing quartz, empty cans mark its way. Scientists of the future may study the tin can relics of the present age with no less interest than the archaeologists of the present explore the heaps of shells accumulated in the neighborhoods frequented by the mollusk-eating men in early times and now known as kitchen-middens. There are in the U.S.A. not less than 2000 firms engaged in packing canned goods. Wisconsin canned peas have acquired an enviable reputation by sheer merit." Incidentally, Milwaukee had then become a large manufacturer of tin cans.

#### Other Manufacturers Complain

A Manitowoc newspaper in 1903 published this news item: "The opening of the pea canning business in this section has paralyzed manufacturing industries. The pea canners are offering fabulous prices for men to work in their factories. The warm weather of the past few days caused the peas to ripen rapidly, and they must be cared for. Large posters are displayed, offering men and boys 20 cents an hour and their board in factories in Green Bay, Sturgeon Bay, and Kewaunee, and the young men are leaving the local factories in large numbers."

#### Canners Organize

From the beginning Manitowoc canners were among the leaders of the industry. They were prominent in both state and national organizations.

Dr. A.C. Fraser of the Albert Landreth Company, Manitowoc, was president of the Western Canned Goods Packer's Association in 1905, having been the first Wisconsin canner to be elected an officer in any canners' association. He served three terms, 1903, 1904, and 1905.

#### A National Pure Food Bill is Enacted

The industry continued to have its problems, of course. In Oshkosh, Wisconsin, a woman died with her cause of death given as ptomaine poisoning, attributed to the eating of spoiled canned food. There were reports of similar difficulty elsewhere. The Congress of the U.S. took note of this, and enacted a National Pure Food Law. Dr. Harvey M. Wiley was named as the head of the Bureau of Chemistry in the Department of Agriculture which was charged with the enforcement of the Pure Food Law.

At first there was furor among canners, since they felt that the legislation was directed against them and could perhaps drive them out of business. Dr. A. Fraser, president of the Albert Landreth Company, Manitowoc, wrote for publication in "The Canner," the national canner's magazine, this letter:

"I have no sympathy whatever with the hysteria which seems to exist at the present time over the pure food law recently passed by Congress and the regulations which have been adopted for its enforcement as affecting canners of vegetables. The law is so simple and explicit in its requirements that I am quite sure the packers need have no uneasiness about its enforcement so long as he knows that goods he is putting in cans contain no adulterant and that he has labeled them for what they are. There are only two things to do, and these I am satisfied have been done by the majority of packers in the past, and will continue

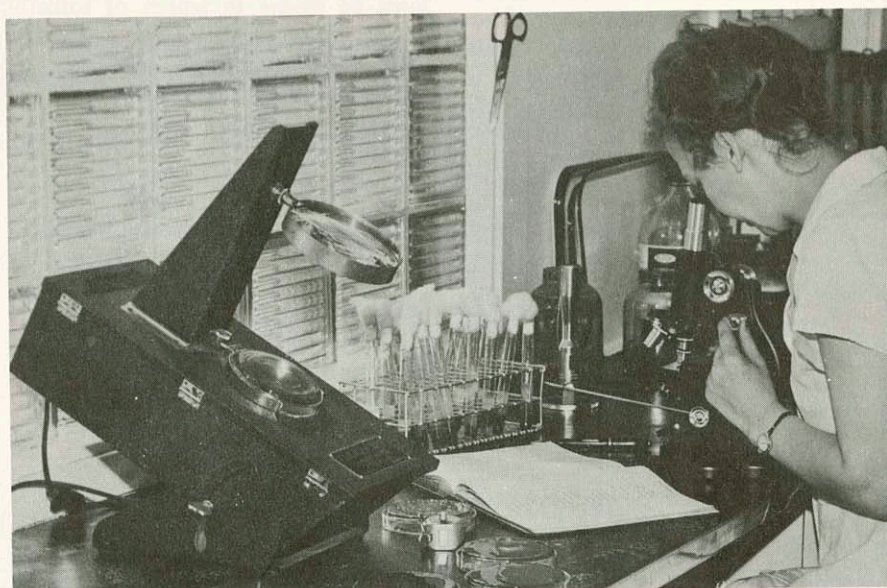
to be done in the future, and they are — to pack pure food only, and not to label it himself, nor allow any jobber to label it with a brand which does not state explicitly what is in the can.

The packers ought to be well enough acquainted with Dr. Wiley by this time to know that he means to be just, and so long as the regulations for enforcing the law will probably be put into operation by him, I cannot understand why the packers with a clear conscience have anything to fear."

Manitowoc can be proud that one of its business leaders had such a high standard of business ethics that he became a leader in support of national legislation which has proven to be an example of great wisdom and foresight.

Although we have indicated some of the problems associated with the food processing industry in the early years, we must not leave the impression that this is a complete treatise of all that transpired. There were many more problems that confronted the pioneers in this industry. However, there are limits as to the length of an occupational monograph, so we must forego a fuller treatment of the topic. To those wishing to explore the topic more fully please refer to a book entitled, "The Story of Wisconsin's Great Canning Industry," by Fred A. Stare, published in 1949, which is available at the Manitowoc Public Library.

In the rest of this monograph we would like to describe briefly the various persons and companies prominent in the food processing industry in Manitowoc County.



In accordance with efforts to consistently pack a quality product, a food laboratory is operated. Continuous tests are made for quality control. A part of that laboratory is shown here.



## Wisconsin Pea Canner's Company Lakeside Packing Company

The story of the pea canning industry as it relates to Manitowoc County up to this point is largely the account of the Albert Landreth Company. In July, 1907, however, this company was sold to the Wisconsin Pea Canner's Company. This company was incorporated in Portland, Maine, with a capital of \$1,300,000. This company acquired control of several of the leading canning companies in Wisconsin, including the Landreth company, and plants at Sheboygan, Amery, Turtle Lake, and Two Rivers, Wisconsin. A plant was acquired at Pittsville, Wisconsin in 1954.

Dr. Fraser remained with the new company, so locally there was no immediate change in the business operation. However, President Charles W. Gillett brought in Mr. Louis E. Wedertz in 1907, who had been in the wholesale grocery business in Burlington, Iowa, and also in Chicago. He took over the management of the local concern, installed such control measures as he felt were desirable, acquired a working knowledge of the pea canning industry, and assumed management of the business when Dr. Fraser left. Mr. L. E. Wedertz ran the operations of the company, expanded production through additional plants, and increased production of the existing plants through modernization, and by adding other commodities. The Lakeside Packing Company was incorporated in 1921, and Mr. Wedertz was elected president, serving in that office until his death in 1936.

His son, Harry L. Wedertz, was first associated with the business in 1908 in the production end of the business. In 1914 he became plant superintendent, then general superintendent and secretary. On the death of his father he became president and served in that capacity until 1961. He then became the Chairman of Board of Directors, serving until his retirement in 1967.

S. K. Ferguson came to the Wisconsin Pea Canners Company in 1911 as a book-keeper. Later he became the Vice-president and treasurer of the company, and served in those offices until his retirement in 1958.

G. A. Lund, son-in-law of Harry L. Wedertz, became president of Lakeside Packing Company in 1961, and in 1967 became Chairman of the Board of Directors and Chief Executive Officer of the company, in which capacity he still serves. He began his employment with the Lakeside Packing Company in 1941.

R. W. Ferguson, son of S.K. Ferguson, has worked for Lakeside Packing Company since 1951, and presently is Vice-

president in charge of sales.

The Lakeside Packing Company also has a plant at Plainview, Minnesota. Corporate headquarters are at Manitowoc, Wisconsin.

Lakeside Packing Company was awarded the coveted "A" award for Agricultural Achievement on August 14, 1944, for its Manitowoc and Sheboygan plants. In 1947 the company celebrated its sixty years in business by publishing a very attractive brochure of twenty pages, profusely illustrated with halftone cuts of plants, personnel, action pictures and finished products.

On April 14, 1948 Lakeside Packing Company, through its president, H.L. Wedertz, received the Brand Names Foundation "Certificate of Public Service." The citation was made at Milwaukee when 77 Wisconsin brand names that have served the American consumer for fifty years or more were honored.

### Manitowoc Pea Packing Company

This company was organized about 1897, the group of organizers being Herbert Markham, Emil Teitgen, Ben Dempsey, Cornelius Madsen, and M.G. Madsen. The company built a two-story frame, iron-clad building in which the canning company operated. Other properties that were used was a defunct flour mill which was used as a warehouse, and another building which was used for storage purposes.

The October 20, 1898 issue of "The Canner" stated: "The Manitowoc Pea Packing Company has put up a considerable pack of tomatoes," a new line of business in this section.

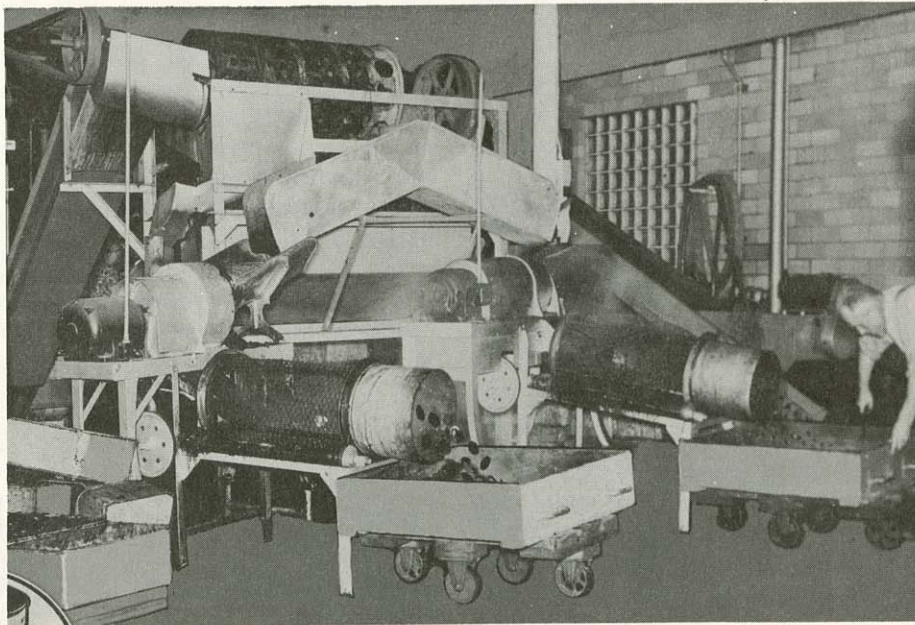
It seems that the first year's venture

was successful for in the December 22nd issue of the "Canner" there was this statement: "The Manitowoc Pea Packing Company has already leased 800 acres of land for next year. The company has all the seed on hand for next year's sowing. It has already disposed of 25,000 cases of this year's output."

### The "Clipper City" Name

A brand name that this company tried to use was "Clipper City." The Milwaukee Sentinel of January 1899 printed a story regarding a law suit that had been instituted in the U.S. District Court in which the rights of the Manitowoc Pea Packing Company to use the words "Clipper City" were contested. The company had adopted the name for a brand of peas and placed great quantities of these on the market. William Numsen of Baltimore packed a brand known as the "Clipper" peas, and had patented the trademark, and accused the Manitowoc firm of an infringement. It was asserted in behalf of the defendant that Manitowoc was known as the Clipper City, and for that reason the company had the right to the use of the term. There was no similarity between the labels of the two companies, the word "Clipper" being all that was in dispute.

On February 2, 1899 a restraining order was issued against the Manitowoc Pea Packing Company on use of the word Clipper or "Clipper brand" on its cans, together with its image of a full-rigged Clipper ship. The court found that though known somewhat as the Clipper City, Manitowoc was not generally known as such and even if it were, equity would necessitate the granting of the injunction.



Slicing and dicing of beets



Mr. Madsen seems to be the only one of the firm who was at all active in association work, and he served as treasurer of the state association in 1908 through 1910.

It seems that the company decided to quit operation after some years because it was never able to make much money. All the equipment of the plant was auctioned off and Harry L. Wedertz purchased all the farm equipment for his company. The canning equipment was not needed by his company; but he put in a bid personally, and found that he had bought something. He later sold the canning equipment to the St. Nazianz Canning Company. It is said that he made enough money on the deal so that he could buy his first motorcycle.

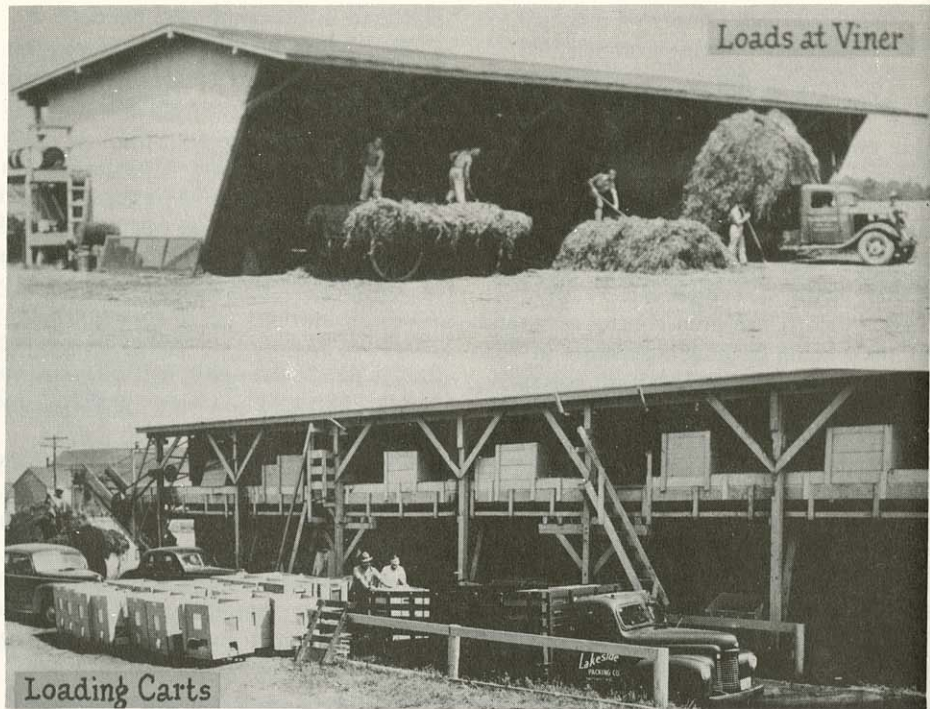
The group interested in this company were largely the same people who owned and operated the M.G. Madsen Seed Company in Manitowoc for many years. This company specialized in garden seeds.

#### East Wisconsin Canning Company

In 1900 John Schuette, president of the Manitowoc Savings Bank, and the Manitowoc Electric Light Company, with knowledge of the success of the Albert Landreth Company in the pea canning business, decided that perhaps he had been overlooking something. He made a trip to Chicago early in February, 1900, to make inquiries about what would be needed in order to get into the food processing business. He also attended the Cannery Convention in Detroit that year. Apparently he was given encouragement to embark into this business for in February, 1900, the company having the name given in this caption was formed. Capital stock amounted to \$50,000. The incorporators were John Schuette, Fred Schuette and George Schuette.

A new feature of the business was an experimental station. The station was located on what was then known as Shove's Farm. A letter written by an officer of the East Wisconsin Canning Company is interesting. It is dated December 18, 1900, and reads thus:

"The term 'pea louse' in referring to anything pertaining to it in the press has done and will do an immense harm to the pea canning industry. It is about the most loathsome creature imaginable, and as many people will get suspicious that this pest cannot be prevented from getting into the canned peas, it will create such an aversion against the canned article as to greatly reduce its consumption. Therefore we would suggest that in the future the term 'pea fly' should be substituted for 'pea louse,' which in reality would be a more correct description of it."



The editor of the magazine to which this letter was directed responded thus: "The idea advanced by the East Wisconsin Canning Company is not a bad one and deserves more than passing notice. There can be no responsible objection to changing the name of this insect to 'pea fly,' as 'pea louse' is not a technical name and nothing but good would come from the use of a name of less suggestive aroma than 'louse.' The use of the latter term may or may not affect the sale of canned peas, but there is certainly no harm done by adopting a less romantic and irritating word than 'louse.'"

Outside of a few acres of beets the company canned peas exclusively. In 1900 about 700 acres of peas were planted, and about 51,000 cases of peas were canned. In 1901, however, only 28,000 cases of cans were produced. It seems that 1901 was a dry season, with the pea louse making inroads into the crop, the season was a poor one. Their brand names were "Manitou," "Sea Gem," and "King Bird."

The company was dissolved early in 1906, with the plant having been sold to the Albert Landreth Company four years earlier.

#### Two Rivers Canning Company

E.J. Vandreuil was the founder of this company. He came to Two Rivers in the late 1890's. Not much is known about this operation, except for excerpts from "The Canner" from time to time. For example, on September 8, 1898, there was this item:

"The canning factory at Two Rivers finished packing string beans last week

and is now putting up tomatoes." It is a known fact that this plant was first engaged in packing crawfish and was turned into a vegetable cannery (but not peas) when it was found by its owner that both the supply and the marketability of crawfish were very uncertain. Incidentally, at one time there were in Wisconsin more canneries for canning of tomatoes than for peas."

In 1899 we find there was a company known as the Vodra Canning Company in Two Rivers. It seems that some years later, Mr. Vandreuil went through the necessary legal steps to change his name from Vodra back to the French, Vandreuil. Of the Vodra Canning Company we find this news item in 1899: "So far as we know this company is the only concern in the U.S.A. which packs crawfish, and over 1000 cases of this delicacy was put up and sold last year. This company also packs tomatoes and beans, and this year will pack peas for the first time."

In 1901 the Vodra Canning Company was incorporated. The incorporators in addition to E.J. Vodra were Peter Schroeder, John Huffman, Jonas Gagecon, and W.H. Voshardt. In addition to canning the company began the manufacture of tin and metal boxes.

In August 1903 the company which by this time was known as the Vandreuil Company, reported a pea pack of 1,500,000 which with the equipment of that period put them in the front rank of all canneries. Their acreage of string beans that year was 300 acres. The company's labels were the "Blue Diamond," "Red Rabbit," "Swallow," and "Light House."



In June 1904 Vandreuil was granted a patent on a grader for string beans which separated the beans into five different sizes. In 1905 the company packed about a million cans of beans, with the quality being "the finest ever seen in this country." They had a pea pack almost as large as the preceding year.

In 1908 the company was sold to the Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company. E.J. Vandreuil became a vice-president in the new company, and remained in charge of the Two Rivers plant. In December 1908, however, he resigned. The company made several efforts to try to retain him, but without success. The Lakeside Packing Company acquired this property soon after.

It appears that Mr. Vandreuil, in company with certain Chicago personages had acquired 3000 acres of land located near Black River Falls. He wished to direct his entire efforts to the development of this property. It appears that he had plans for the erection of a pea and bean canning factory there.

However, it appears that the plans were changed and instead they planned to develop a new town by the name of Vandreuil. They planned to build a cannery in the center of the town, and the rest of the land would be used for the production of peas and beans needed by the cannery. Although Vandreuil had realized the sum of \$335,000 from his Two Rivers plant, this sum was not sufficient for his grandiose plans in Jackson County. It turned out that this venture was a failure. Vandreuil then moved to Owen in Clark County and later to Eau Claire.

#### Cleveland Canning Company

Cleveland had a small cannery, built and operated by O'Neil Brothers, but they discontinued operations in 1912, after ten years, and converted the cannery into a feed and grist mill. Late in 1923, members of the Johannes family of Port Washington, who owned the Knellsville Pea Canning Company, decided to build an additional plant. Accordingly, John H. Nicholas, and Edward A. Johannes, incorporated the Johannes Pure Food Company and built a factory at Cleveland. The plant was in readiness for the pack in 1924. The company continued to operate under that name until October 3, 1939, when the company was reorganized under 77B. Bankruptcy Act that year by Al W. Johannes and operated as Cleveland Canning Company by the Trustees. In 1940 reorganization was completed and the name changed to Lake Shore Canning Company.

In the 1950's production of peas and

corn reached a maximum of 180,000 cases of peas and 250,000 cases of corn. In 1962 Al W. Johannes died, and the next three years were bad financially. The plant was sold to Hipke Packing Corporation of New Holstein on April 16, 1965, who presently operate under that name and at a reduced capacity in peas and about the same production in corn.

The plant was equipped with two lines of machinery for peas, and in the early years packed about 60,000 cases. In 1926 the necessary equipment to pack green and wax beans was installed and beans were packed for a number of years, but discontinued in 1932.

In 1935 machinery was installed for both cream style and whole kernel corn. Extensive improvements were made in the period from 1940 to 1945, greatly increasing the capacity of the plant. A new corn building was erected in 1945. Following the erection of that additional plant, capacity was about 120,000 cases of peas a year and 125,000 cases of corn. The company has four labels which it uses on its pack, namely, "Lake Shore Farms," "Shore Gardens," "Gulliver," and "Hearthstone."

#### Valders Canning Company

The Valders Canning Company was incorporated in September 1913. The officers were William F. Christel, president, Philip Koenig, vice-president, Albert A. Schnurr, secretary, and Nic Filz, treasurer. Koenig died in 1926, Filz in 1941. Others who became prominent in this company were: Frank Heimerl, N.W. Christel, Max R. Pankratz, Frank Pieper and Math. Isselmann, Sr.

During the first year of operation this company packed about 35,000 cases of peas. In 1919 another line was added in which the peas were packed in No. 10 cans. Their total pack in that season was about 75,000 cases of peas. In 1928 equipment for snap beans was added. The company marketed its products largely under its own brand name. Such names as "Sweet Sixteen," "Moonlight Bay," "Pleasant Smile," and "Valders Best," were popular brand names, some of them existing through almost its entire history. The company was known for many years as "the biggest little peapacker in Wisconsin," because it specialized in the canning of peas.

In 1923 the company established a plant for peas only at Hilbert in Calumet County. Also in 1929 the company took over the plant at St. Nazianz, which had been built in 1901, and which was a one-line plant with a capacity of about 35,000 cases of peas.

William F. Christel remained active in the company until he was eighty-eight years of age, directing the production and selling of from 150,000 to 200,000 cases of peas each year. He always was an advocate of quality, and was an active and outspoken man at meetings of the Wisconsin Cannery Association. He died in 1952 at the age of 90 years.

Mr. Christel had to his credit thirteen inventions in the field of vegetable canning. His Texture Meter, a portable instrument, helped determine the state of maturity of raw peas. It is perhaps his best known invention since it influenced the canning industry all over the world. His triple reel grader, twin reel pea viner, small pea podder, improvements on the Huntly Bean Cutter, are all items on which he spent much time. It is claimed that he also designed the Hume-Love Pea Harvester and gave the drawings to the manufacturer in consideration of which the family had the sales agency in the state of Wisconsin.

William F. Christel was succeeded as General Manager by Max R. Pankratz. Mr. Pankratz served the firm for 39 years, starting his career when peas were harvested by hand. He was succeeded in 1960 by Ed Holsen who held the position of General Manager of the plant when it was decided to quit business. (Max Pankratz is still living and is a member of our Society.)

More than one hundred farmers raised peas each year for the Valders Canning Company. During the canning season the company had a labor force of three hundred persons, with most of the workers coming from the Valders area. In a company publication these laborers were described as "dependable and conscientious. We have no need for foreign or imported labor," the publication stated.

The Valders Canning Company was owned by twenty stockholders. The decision to quit business was a voluntary one. The president in announcing the decision to discontinue operations said, "Economic and technical changes in the past years have forced food processors into constant changes in order to operate efficiently and compete effectively. Great production expansion has taken place and will continue but with fewer and larger processors. We decided to quit while we were ahead, rather than take the yearly risks in a highly competitive business."

It was noted that the number of canning companies in Wisconsin in 1963 had dropped to 61 from 100 a decade earlier. However, in the same decade canning crops and production had increased more than 80%.



## Pioneer Canning and Pickling Company St. Nazianz, Wisconsin

"The Canner" of January 31, 1901 contained this item: "A stock company has been formed at St. Nazianz to build and operate a canning factory to be capitalized for \$15,000 of which \$11,400 has already been subscribed by the business men and some farmers of the vicinity. The chief products to be canned will be tomatoes and corn. The climate and soil of the area is very well adapted for these vegetables as has been proven by tests."

The directors as of March, 1901, were John Miller, John Stiefader, William F. Christel and Dr. T.C. O'Brien, all residents of St. Nazianz. William F. Christel later became the owner of the plant. At the time he purchased the plant he said, "We had no pea viners, the peas were picked by hand in the fields like the snap beans are still harvested today." This meant that they must have started with a pod huller, which was the method used at Manitowoc, Sheboygan and Green Bay in the early years.

In an article in "The Canner" in 1901 we find this excerpt: "The canning factory at St. Nazianz has contracted with farmers for a considerable acreage of corn, peas, beans, and tomatoes, and the further fact that in testing out the machinery after the plant had been completed, the boiler exploded and did much damage to the plant."

John F. Koeck was the superintendent and manager of the plant for many years. Pea viners were put in early in this company's operation.

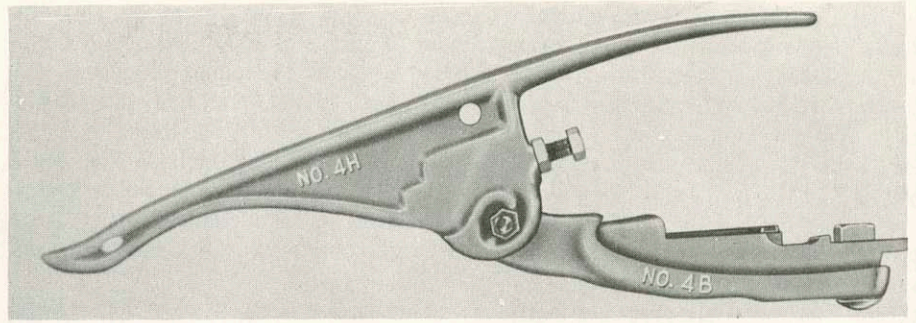
It was in March 1929 that the Valders Canning Company took over the Pioneer Canning and Pickling Company at St. Nazianz.

### Other Companies Aid in Development of Food Processing Industry

From time to time in this monograph we have alluded to certain inventions that contributed significantly to development of the food processing industry. For example, the use of tin cans and their manufacture was an important development. The work of William Christel in designing improved harvesting machinery and canning equipment has also been discussed.

### The Gaterman Manufacturing Company

The Gaterman Manufacturing Company of Manitowoc played a significant role in the food processing industry, especially in the area of improved harvesting practices. At one time peas were picked by hand labor in the fields. While reapers and mowers had been in use for the cutting of grain and forage crops for a



Cutter guard made by Gaterman Mfg. Co.

number of years, their use in cutting peas was not practical. The problem was that pea vines hugged the ground so closely that the cutting bar was not able to cut the stem near enough to the ground without causing waste of a major part of the vine.

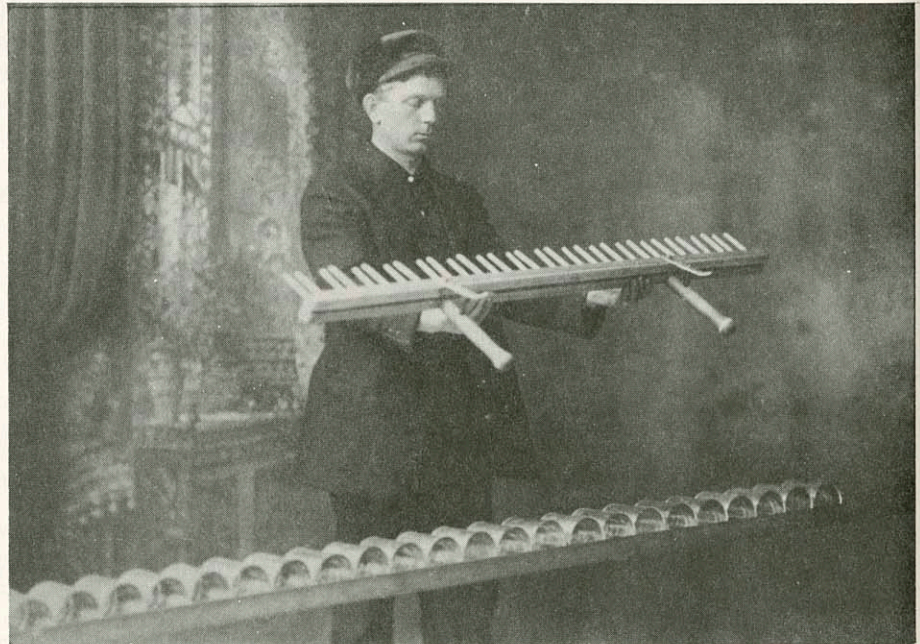
Mr. William Gaterman, founder of the company with that name, came to Manitowoc in 1907. Previously he had been a farmer in the county and knew well the problems that farmers had in harvesting crops. In addition to farming he had done much machinery repair work and blacksmithing, and in a small way had designed improvements on machines manufactured by other companies. In 1907 he designed a "pea lifter guard" that was attached to the cutting bar of a mower, so that the pea vine could be properly cut. Soon after, he came out with a second invention, namely a "wind rower." This was an attachment which was put behind the cutting bar. It gathered the cut pea vines and rolled them into a wind row. Both cutting and wind rowing was done in one operation. The wind rows were then picked up with

loaders and loaded on wagons or trucks for transportation to the pea viners. The viners separated the peas from the pods.

The Gaterman Company still is a family business today in the third generation (Wm. Gaterman—founder, Erwin P. Gaterman, his son and Wm. C. and Glenn R. Gaterman, grandsons), and has added to the lines of equipment which have been a major part of the company's business all through the years. Today it manufactures crop saving attachments for self-propelled machinery which have been designed to speed up the harvesting process. The company also does contract fabricating of many kinds.

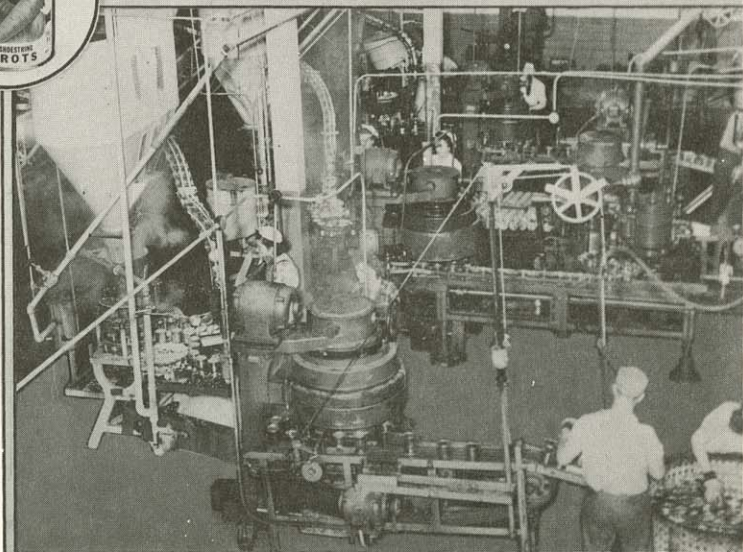
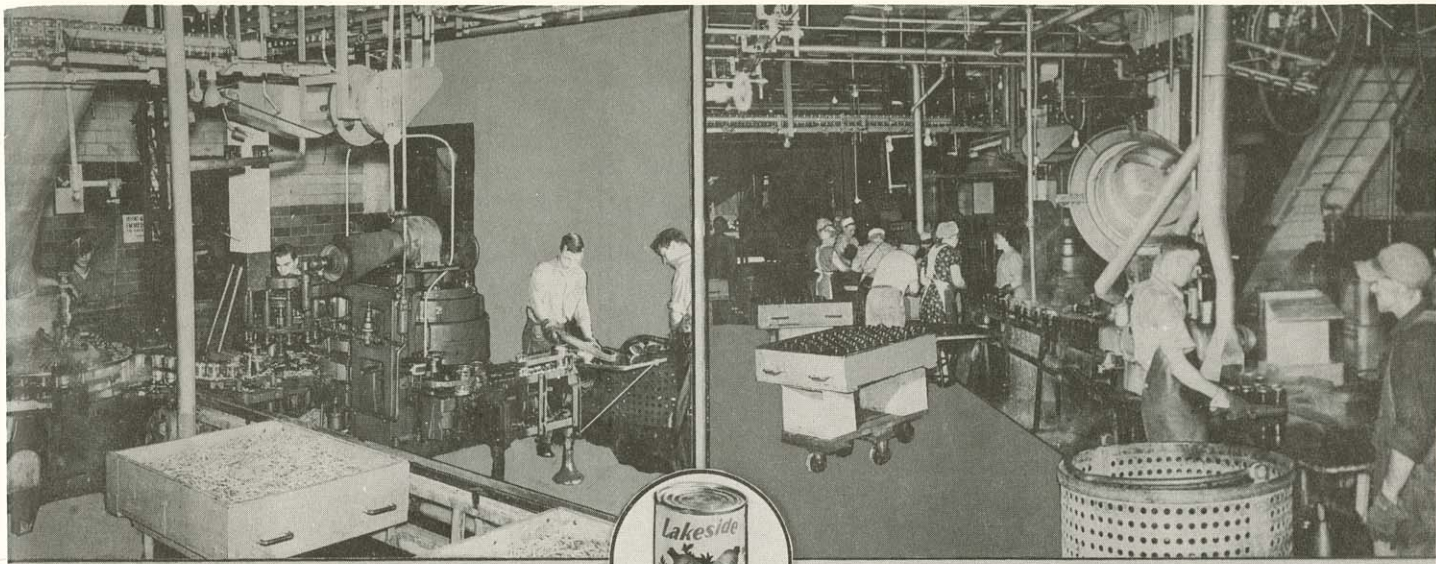
### The Sure-grip Sanitary Can Fork Company

The genius of the American working man is that he is always looking for easier, quicker and better ways of performing a task. When tin cans came into use, the problem of handling them developed. The "Sure-grip Sanitary Can Fork" was invented to meet a need for a quicker and easier way of handling cans. Edward Bonk and Michael Plotka were officers in this company. With this device



Can Fork





one person could handle sixteen cans at a time and place them in storage, or on the assembly line. This was a small company as the receipts and expenditures for one year of operation show. Nevertheless, it is an example of the part that many people had in the development of this industry. Some had major roles, and some lesser, but all of them together aided in the steady development of an industry which today has become highly mechanized. This mechanization begins in the farmer's field and continues all the way to the time when the food is on the grocers' shelves. It has all added up to cheaper costs of production and a diet for the American people which makes them the envy of everyone else on earth.

#### A Summary Paragraph

Manitowoc County can be very proud of the part it has had in the development of the food processing industry. It was because of the ingenuity of one of its early citizens that the industry developed at all. And it was because of the vision, integrity, and leadership of men in this industry in Manitowoc county that Manitowoc has remained among the leaders in America in food processing. They have contributed significantly to the economy of this county. Our community owes them much and we salute them for their contributions to our way of life.

Lakeside Packing Company was one of the pioneers in the packing of fancy vegetables in glass. Experiments were made as early as 1915, packing in tumbler shaped jars. At the present time, glass packing is an important part of their business. On this page are pictures of various views of their filling and closing operations, which are geared to highest operating efficiency, both in glass and in tin cans.



Harry Wedertz examining the "A" Achievement Award Flag presented to Lakeside Packing Company.



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