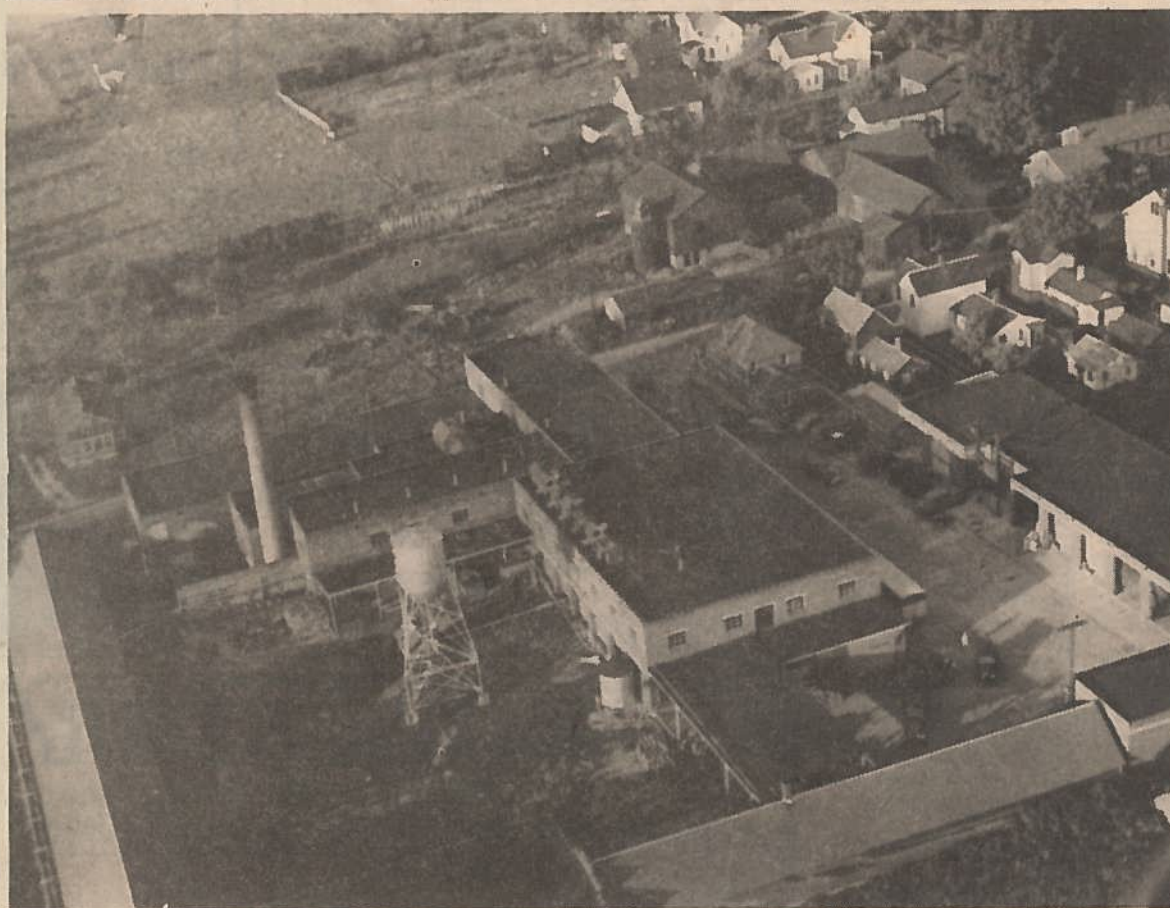


THE BARRE CENTER CANNING PLANT



The upper photo taken by Fred Holt in 1934 shows the original Barre Center Canning Plant on Maple Street which was built by Barton and Journal Salisbury between 1899 and 1901. Fifty years ago on April 13, 1946 these buildings were completely destroyed by fire.

The lower photo, a bird's eye view, loaned by Mrs. Leila Dale, was taken around 1947 and shows the new factory which was built on the same site. My thanks to her for the use of this picture and also to Mark Turner for inspiring this story.

In 1968 the Town of Barre celebrated its Sesquicentennial and published a booklet on its history. It is in this publication we find a chapter written by the late Austin Dale about the Barre Center Canning Plant. He indicates that before the old canning plant was built, there was a large sawmill located on the site powered by a steam engine. Also, within this old mill, was one of the largest water wells in Orleans County having a ten-foot diameter. It was hand-dug thirty feet deep and laid up with large stones, but was also drilled another thirty feet, giving a total depth of sixty feet. This water supply was to become imperative for running a canning factory.

In the late 19th century the Salisbury Brothers bought an apple press which they located in the old mill and powered by the steam engine. They produced here, custom cider and also made barrels, hiring about ten coopers for several years.

In 1899 with the financial help of their uncle, Guy Salisbury, they formed a partnership under the name of Orleans County Canning Co. and built the factory in the upper photo. The two items packed at first were peas and tomatoes. Supposedly this plant was one of the very first canning factories in the state to use tin cans which required the covers to be hand soldered. In 1920, after Journal Salisbury was elected Commissioner of Welfare, he sold his interest to his brother Barton.

In 1922 Wallace W. Dale bought the plant and continued in business under the name of Orleans County Canning Co. From this point on, new equipment was added which increased the variety of fruits and vegetables being processed. Mr. Dale hired over fifty people and produced several thousand cases of packed food each season. The plant warehouse was also used to store wool which Mr Dale bought in the county for the Boston wool market. He also stored and sold cedar shingles.

In 1934 Wallace Dale formed a partnership with his son Austin, under the name of Orleans County Canning Co. They processed peas, cherries, toma-

atoes, tomato juice, tomato puree, catsup and apples. During World War II more than sixty percent of the production was for the Armed Forces. Austin Dale states:

"On April 13, 1946, the old wooden canning plant, built by the Salisbury brothers, was completely destroyed by fire. Mr. Dale, when arriving home from a business trip in Indiana, immediately started building a new canning plant, of brick construction. Eleven weeks after the fire, the new plant processed the largest pack of peas in its history. This was done by the way, without a roof on the plant, as construction of the roof was completed later.

"After completion of the new plant, the production was now approximately two hundred thousand cases yearly, plus several thousand cases handled from other packers. And the plant employed approximately three hundred people.

"In 1954, the partnership sold the plant to a group of Growers, who had supplied the plant with fruits and vegetables for many years. The new group incorporated under the name of Orleans County Canning Co., Inc. The factory continued operation, as a canning plant, until early 1958."

In the fall of 1958 Irving Cooper and Associates of Buffalo, purchased the factory and used it for storage. Later it was sold to Zicari Produce Co. of Albion which at the present time uses it for cabbage storage.

I'm told that at the time of the fire, there was a water tank which collapsed, spilling nearly 60,000 gallons of water which inadvertently helped put out the fire in the boilers of the factory. Water was pumped by firefighters from a nearby quarry to help put out the fire. Many other buildings in close proximity to the fire including Grange Hall, church and several houses were saved, primarily, because of little wind on April 13, 1946.

As a side note to all this, I would mention that it was Wallace and Austin Dale, Carl Rowe, and "Bud" Pilon who in September 1940 established Dale and Son Supermarket in Albion. It was the first supermarket in the area and was first located in the former Citizen Bank building on North Main Street. We know the establishment as Jubilee Foods at 134 South Main Street today.

In Vol. XVIII, No. 14, entitled "Spoofing", John Long has identified one of the "Even Fellows" as Sam Watt, a local Harness Maker, who died in 1950. And yes, he was a Mason!