

Snider Packing Corp.

9-28-07

Our photos by Fred Holt are taken from two different issues of the Albion Midlander.

The night scene of the Snider Canning Factory is from October 1933. The greenhouse picture is from June 1937. Both issues of this paper give us some facts about the Snider Packing Corp.

This was one of the largest canning factories of seasonal produce in the world at the time.

The commercial canning of produce commenced during the mid-19th century. The first plant in Albion was started in 1903 as the Burt Olney Canning Co. In 1919 it became the New York Cannery Inc., and in 1921 they bought control of the T. A. Snider's Preserve Co. A few years later the name was changed to Snider Packing Corp.

The Albion plant handled thousands of tons of fruit and vegetables grown in our vicinity each season. Under the Snider label were peas, string beans, red kidney beans, pork and beans and even baby food. Tomatoes, however, were the most versatile product. Such tomato products reported in 1933 were: ketchup, chili sauce, oyster cocktail sauce, tomato soup, tomato pulp, tomato cocktail, tomato juice and canned tomatoes. About 10 million containers, both tin and glass, were produced in 1933. In the height of the harvest season, 10,000 cases containing 24 cans were processed daily. This required, in the month of August alone, more than 65 carloads of cans, bottles, sugar, boxes, caps and other supplies.

In 1932 the Snider plant had the distinction

of putting out the first mechanically vined pack of peas. In 1933 they broadened the line to cauliflower, peaches, corn on the cob and whole kernel corn.

During the peak season around 900 people were on the payroll. The corporation's method of obtaining produce was through contracts with growers. Pea seed, for example, was furnished the farmer on contract. Many tomato plants were grown in the company's greenhouses and furnished to the grower.

The cost of the seed and plants were deducted from the produce once the farmer brought it to the plant, at a previously agreed price. In 1933 several thousand acres of tomatoes along with 2,000 acres of peas were under contract.

In greenhouses the seed was first broadcast in flat boxes with rich soil. Here they germinated in warm bright light aided by watering.

After 21 days, the seedlings were transplanted into flats with 108 plants in each flat. Then they were held in cold frames where temperatures were just high enough to keep them from freezing. By around May 25 they were ready for distribution to the farmers for planting.

Aside from the Snider greenhouse, there were a number of other greenhouses operated by various individuals. Millions of plants were produced each season in our vicinity years ago.

NOTICE: The Annual Fall Tour of Mount Albion Cemetery is planned for 2 p.m. Oct. 13.

