

Above: SandHill Marketing photo. (All photos from the Richland County History Room unless noted otherwise).

Pacific Coast Condensery Plant - 920 Sextonville Road - 1910-1911.



During the second decade of the twentieth century, fluid milk sales became a significant segment of the dairy economy. Improved production techniques and production standards ushered in a gradual increase in consumption between 1890 and 1910. About one-half of Wisconsin's milk market in the second decade was processed into condensed milk. By 1920, Wisconsin had gained one-quarter of the condensed milk market in the United States.

In 1864, Gail Borden's New York Condensed Milk Company constructed The New York Milk Condensery in Brewster, New York. This was the largest and most advanced milk factory of its day and was Borden's first commercially successful plant. Over 200 dairy farmers supplied 20,000 gallons of milk daily to the Brewster plant as demand increased driven by the American Civil War.

Soldiers returning home from the war soon spread the word, and by the late 1860s condensed milk was a major product across America. In 1899, E. B. Stuart opened the first Pacific Coast Condensed Milk Company (later known as the Carnation Milk Products Company) plant in Kent, Washington.

In 1914, Otto F. Hunziker, head of Purdue University's dairy department, self-published "Condensed Milk and Milk Powder: Prepared for the Use of Milk Condenseries, Dairy Students and Pure Food Departments." This text, along with the additional work of Professor Hunziker and others involved with the American Dairy Science Association, standardized and improved condensery operations in the United States and internationally.



The First World War regenerated interest in, and the market for, condensed milk, primarily due to its storage and transportation benefits. In the U.S. the higher price for raw milk paid by condenseries created significant problems for the cheese industry.

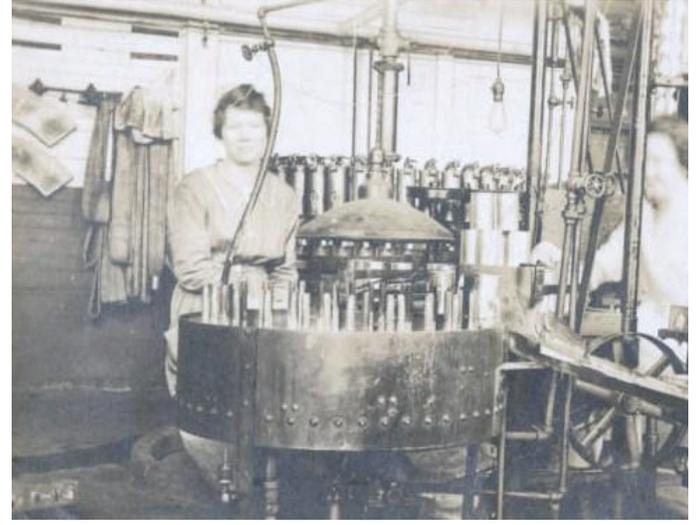
Both condensed milk and evaporated milk are forms of concentrated milk in which approximately 60 percent of the water content has been removed. The major difference that sets these two canned milk products apart is sugar content; sweetened condensed milk, as the name implies, is always sweetened, while evaporated milk is unsweetened.

In 1910, the Pacific Coast Condensery, an auxiliary of the Carnation Milk Products Company erected a milk condensing plant in Richland Center. A large adjacent barn sheltered horses necessary for the collection of milk from area farmers. Later on there were privately owned milk-trucks that brought in the milk. The company served an out-of-state market shipping as far west as Nebraska and Colorado and to the east coast.

Established by Borden, the first condensed milk plant in Wisconsin appeared in Monroe, Green County, in 1889. Until 1905, there were 17 plants located in southeast Wisconsin. By 1920, the number had grown to 67. In the pre-WW I days, the Richland Center location was the largest plant owned by the Carnation Company in the world. The Carnation Milk Products Company proved to be a great asset to the city and county. Operation began in May of 1911 with 100 employees, and by the summer, the plant was processing 70,000 pounds of milk daily. In 1937, the largest single order up to that time was placed by the U.S. Navy for 40 carloads of the company's product. This order involved 37,000 cases containing 48 tall cans each of Carnation milk, every drop coming from Richland County.

In the fall of 1962, the Carnation Company remodeled the plant extensively. A new milk intake system was installed as well as a large loading dock that covered three railroad spur lines. The plant was closed in 1967 and eventually was sold

to the Gold Bond Ice Cream Company. Milk processing continues on at this site formerly occupied by the Pacific Coast Condensery. Schreiber Foods, based in Green Bay, WI. operates it as one of their two yogurt and sour cream plants located in Richland Center.



Above: Condensery Stables. Right: Canning line.



Fluid milk has been processed at this location on Sextonville Road since 1911. Richland Center has four large dairy plants in operation: two by Schreiber Foods, a Foremost Farms-USA plant and Alcam Creamery, a large butter producer. They all have interesting stories to tell also.