

CHAPTER 3

CANNING IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY DELAWARE

CANNING ENJOYED A CENTRAL ROLE in Delaware's economy from the Civil War era through World War II. Every community worth the name was a cannery site, and larger towns had several (APPENDIX 4). Introduction of canning technology allowed Delaware's nineteenth-century farmers to diversify their vegetable and fruit crops, and gave them access to distant markets beyond the range of fresh vegetable sales. The history of canning, however, is also the history of changing settlement patterns.

Canning and Settlement Patterns

Settlement patterns analysis is the core of recent synoptic works in the fields of archæology and historic preservation. A theme called "Settlement Patterns and demographic change" is identified at the top of the priority lists in the State Plan for Historic Preservation (Ames, Callahan, Herman, and Siders 1989:79). Settlement patterns provide a convenient framework for the study of historic agricultural communities. Geographers are fond of defining the American rural landscape in terms of central places along major lines of communication (Conzen 1981:311).

Philadelphia's steamboats and schooners tied the Delaware and South Jersey coasts together commercially. Before the railroad came, the bay was the main artery of trade, and both personal and trading relationships continued long after the trains came. Glass containers and canning machinery from Millville, Salem, and Bridgeton could, and did, cross the bay easily to Delaware canneries. When a glassworks opened in Dover, sand and workmen came from the Millville area. This east-west connection with New Jersey dimmed somewhat with the coming of the railroads, but was not extinguished until the more recent period of highway dominance, with its strong north-south orientation.

TABLE 4

CANNERY OWNERSHIP IN DELAWARE

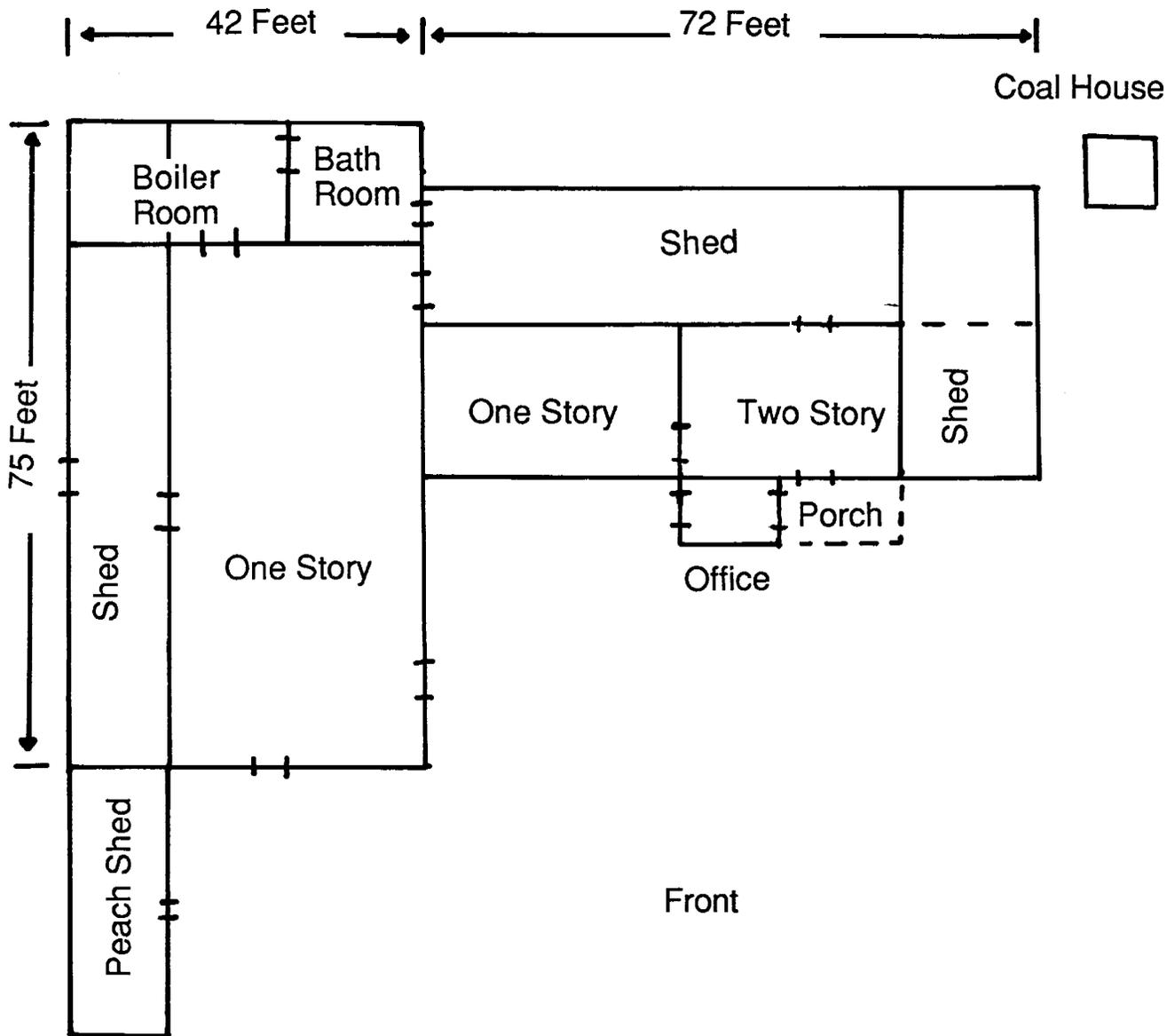
PLANT LOCATION: LOCATION OF OWNER	SUSSEX COUNTY		KENT COUNTY		NEW CASTLE COUNTY		TOTAL	PERCENT OF ALL FIRMS
	NO.	%	NO.	%	NO.	%		
Delmarva	240	80.26	207	82.47	64	62.75	511	78.37
Maryland:								
Joppa	1	0.33					1	0.15
Aberdeen	16	5.35	10	3.98	22	21.56	48	7.36
Bel Air	5	1.60					5	0.76
Baltimore	12	4.01	10	3.98	2	1.96	24	3.68
Harford Co.	1	0.33	6	2.4			7	1.07
Havre de Grace	5	1.60	1	0.39	5	4.90	11	1.68
<i>Maryland subtotal:</i>	<i>40</i>	<i>13.22</i>	<i>27</i>	<i>10.75</i>	<i>29</i>	<i>28.42</i>	<i>96</i>	<i>14.70</i>
Pennsylvania:								
Philadelphia	2	0.66	2	0.79	3	2.94	7	1.07
West Chester					1	0.98	1	0.15
<i>Pennsylvania subtotal:</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0.66</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0.79</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>3.92</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1.22</i>
New Jersey:								
Trenton			1	0.39			1	0.15
Salem					1	0.98	1	0.15
Camden	2	0.66	1	0.39	1	0.98	4	0.61
Bridgeton	1	0.33					1	0.15
Burlington					1	0.98	1	0.15
<i>New Jersey subtotal:</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>2</i>	<i>0.78</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>2.94</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1.22</i>
New York:								
New York City	1	0.33	4	1.59	1	0.98	6	0.92
Other cities	2	0.66					2	0.30
<i>New York subtotal</i>	<i>3</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>4</i>	<i>1.59</i>	<i>1</i>	<i>0.98</i>	<i>8</i>	<i>1.22</i>
Miami, Florida	4	1.33					4	0.61
Chicago, Illinois	1	0.33	2	0.79			3	0.46
Other	6	2.00	7	2.78	1	0.98	14	2.14
Total ownerships	299	100%	251	100%	102	100%	652	100%

SOURCE: Derived from Bryan's list of Delaware canneries, appendix 4. Each firm name is considered a new ownership unless it obviously was a mere name change. Local ownership includes any owner on Delmarva, as well as all the ownerships for which no place is given. These determinations are purely subjective and superficial, and should not be interpreted as definitive.

Figure 5

Plan of the Little Creek cannery

Redrawn from a plan in Kent County Mutual Insurance Company declaration 4518, dated September 2, 1873, Delaware Archives. The applicant was James L. Heverin, president of the company and father-in-law of William Eastman Cotter, who was the principal owner of both the Little Creek and Lebanon canneries. Heverin was also a director of Kent County Mutual, and had signed the application for insurance on the Lebanon cannery.



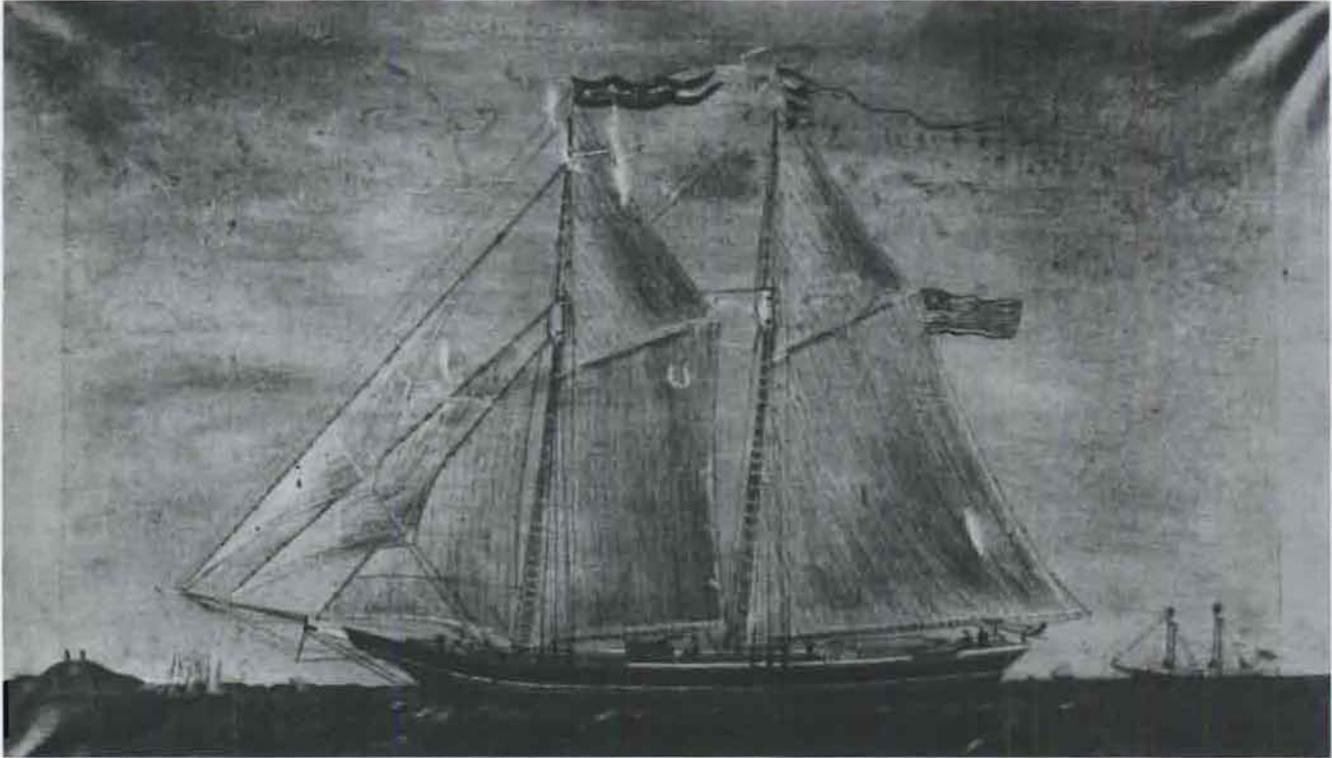


Plate 10

Schooner *Rachel A. Collins*, G. H. Lollis, master, built at Lebanon and named for the wife of canner John S. Collins. The portrait was painted in 1874 by J. H. Bell and was loaned by N. Maxson Terry of Dover.

Canning technology reached Delaware simultaneously with the Delaware Railroad; the two arrivals were undoubtedly related. However, many canneries also were sited along rivers, served by schooner and steamboat navigation. Water and rail transportation existed side by side, and served their respective communities with apparent success until both were supplanted by trucks within the past few decades.

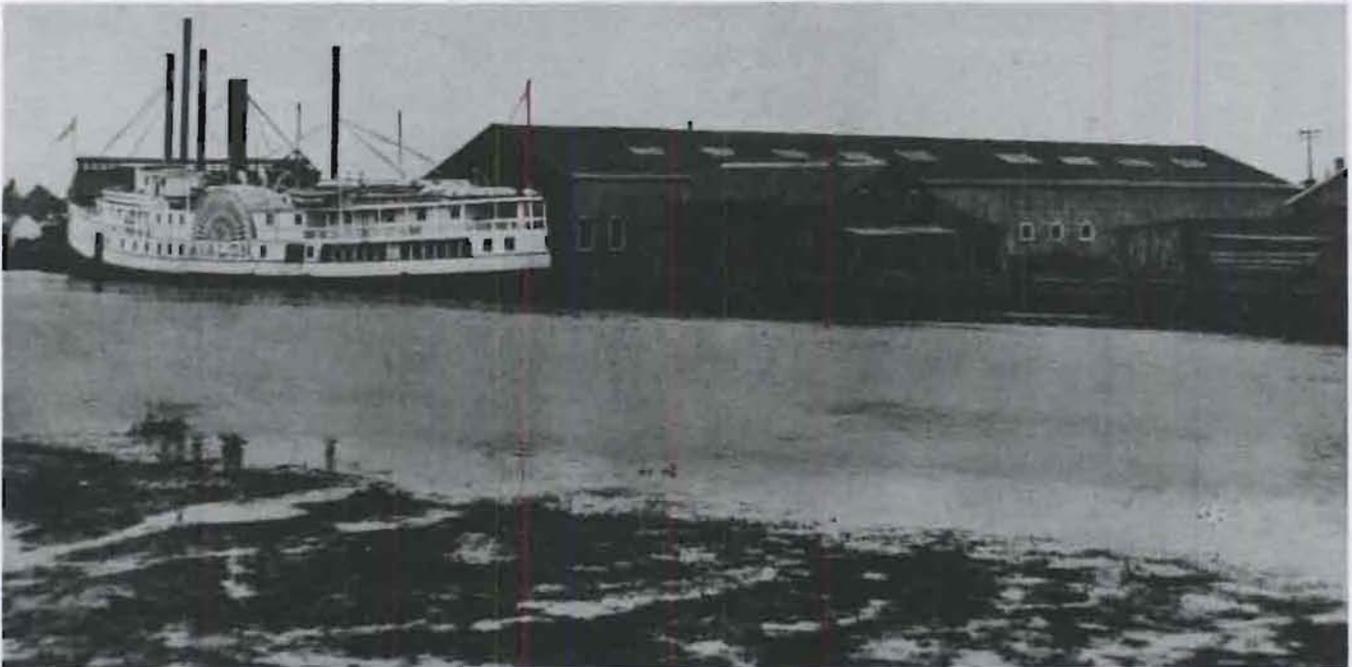


Plate 11

Steamer *Avalon* tied up at the Greenabaum Brothers cannery wharf in Seaford, from a postcard postmarked 1916, courtesy of Eleanor Jamison, of Seaford..

Each Delmarva cannery was a node in the Philadelphia or Baltimore trade network, funneling goods into those central places for distribution to the west and to world markets. With the opening of the Pennsylvania Railroad to Chicago, the Philadelphia hinterland was positioned to provide canned fruits and vegetables by rail to the growing populations of the arid west. Such firms as Heinz at Pittsburgh and Campbell near Philadelphia developed their present market share a century ago because of excellent transportation along this route.

Although most of the canneries were locally owned (TABLE 2), outsiders from the Baltimore area owned a significant number, followed by a scattering of owners from other areas. The absentee owners were clustered along the Pennsylvania Railroad (Philadelphia, Baltimore, & Washington) line from the Susquehanna River to Baltimore, the center of the canning industry.



Plate 12

Steamer *Clio*, of Odessa, tied up at Watkins' Cannery on the Appoquinimink. Husking of corn for canning is in progress in an open shed at left. From the Frances Finley Collection, Corbit-Calloway Memorial Library, Odessa.

The wreck of the steamer *Bertrand* on the Missouri River in Nebraska Territory in 1865 has provided archaeologists with a window on the westward canned-goods trade in its early stages. Cans included products from Fithian and Pogue, Bridgeton, New Jersey; P. C. Tomson, Philadelphia; Aldrich and Yerkes, Philadelphia; John Annier, Philadelphia; W. H. Thomas, Baltimore; Mitchell, Baltimore; and Preston and Merrill, Boston. Canned goods on the *Bertrand* included cranberry sauce, peaches, and even pineapple from sources in the Philadelphia and Baltimore trading regions (Rock 1987).



Plate 13

Stetson and Ellison Plant #3, Houston, from a glass plate Holmes negative, courtesy Mr. and Mrs. Howard A. Sheppard, Dover.. The plant is oriented toward the railroad, with a large raiiside sign facing the trains. By the gate is a separate office, a common fire-protection measure found at other canneries including the one at Lebanon.

A widely-held "axiom of indispensability" of railroads has been challenged in recent years by historians, but its existence was a driving force in nineteenth-century American society (Fogel 1963). Like other social myths, such as racial supremacy and divine right monarchy, the indispensability of railroads is itself a force in history, regardless of its truth.

The New Jersey machinery connection

Oberlin Smith established the Ferracute Machine Company of Bridgeton, New Jersey in 1863, as a general machine and casting shop. Within a few years, Ferracute was the principal maker of can-making machinery. The growing cannery center of Baltimore relied upon Ferracute presses, as did the canners of the Delmarva Peninsula.

TABLE 5
 DELAWARE ENTRIES FROM THE
 FERRACUTE MACHINE COMPANY LEDGER 1877-1881

(not all of whom were canners)
 at the Soda House, Hagley Museum and Library, Greenville, Delaware

Brown, Hansen & Co.....	Wyoming
J. W. Cuykendall	Milford
W. A. Cockerell.....	Stanton
J. M. Chambers.....	Dover
Dilworth & Stewart.....	Port Penn
Farmers Fruit Preserving Co.	Lebanon (Rising Sun)
Green & Wilson.....	Greenville
Georgetown Packing Co.....	Georgetown
S. W. Hall & Co.	Frederica
S. W. Hall.....	Leipsic
J. H. Hoffecker	Smyrna
G. M. Howell of Trenton, New Jersey.....	Milford
J. H. Houston, care of Capt. Twiford	Seaford
Little Creek Canning Co.	Little Creek
Lincoln Canning Co.....	Lincoln
J. Thomas Lowe	Little Creek
W. H. Miller.....	Henry Clay
Peck, Tindall & Co.	Felton
Peck, Clifton & Co.....	Felton
Richardson and Robbins	Dover
C. P. Rogers.....	Frederica
Reynolds & Postles.....	Frederica
I. T. Shallcross.....	Port Penn
A. W. Small	Lincoln
Stetson & Ellison	Camden
Vienna Fruit Packing Co.....	Seaford
J. F. S. Wroten.....	Bridgeville
S. C. Watkins	Odessa

Ferracute's ledger for 1877-1881 has survived (above), but it represents a period when the Lebanon cannery was not particularly likely to be buying machinery. Ferracute sold what appears to have been an entire factory to H. K. and B. F. Thurber of New York, who then owned the Lebanon cannery. This equipment almost certainly went to their new operation in Moorestown, New Jersey, touted as the largest in the world. The last owner of the Lebanon cannery, William E. Cotter, was interested in the Little Creek cannery, which bought from Ferracute.

Ferracute machinery was owned by everyone connected with the Lebanon cannery. Collins and Heverin, active in the Lebanon and Little Creek cannery companies, were partners with one another in the Marydel cannery, which in 1874 bought the 1869 Ferracute press originally owned by L. J. Wicks and company of Bridgeton (Cox 1985:12).

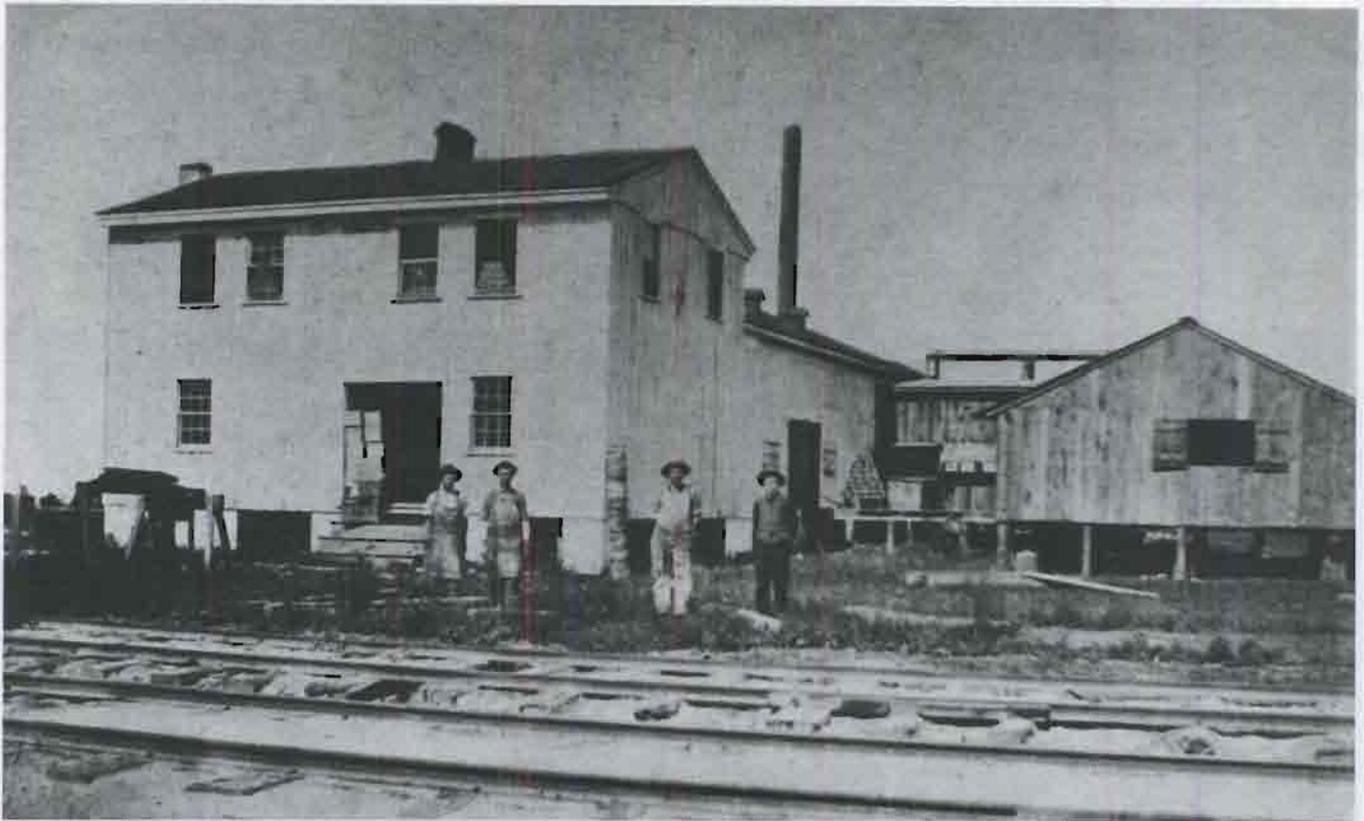


Plate 14

Four staff members of the H. P. Cannon cannery, Bridgeville, Delaware, lined up in front of their plant, along the railroad track. On the upstairs windowsill, probably the can shop, can be seen samples of their art. The buildings are entirely on piers or posts, which would leave little archæological footprint.

From the ledger (Table 4) it is obvious that Ferracuta's machinery dominated the regional canning industry. The firm's "drawing ledger" or index of shop drawings, lists can dies made for the Farmers Fruit Preserving Company, for J. M. Chambers, and for Stetson and Ellison. Each Ferracuta press is described in a "press card" still preserved at the company's plant in St. Louis. Original owners are listed, together with some later owners who bought parts or service for presses. Several Delaware canners are known to be represented in the press cards, but it was impossible to use them in this project; the author of the history of Ferracuta, Arthur J. Cox of Bridgeton, has made notes of some, and informs the author that they reflect similar geographical connections to the ones identified in the ledger.

The largest Dover area customer was Richardson and Robbins; their Ferracute equipment included irregular dies; combination, bottom, hole, and cap dies; a beader; a blocking bolster; a power embossing press; and upright crimping machines. Considering his dependence upon Ferracute, it was not surprising that A. B. Richardson would help E. L. Jones, a young Ferracute mechanic, to set up his own machine works in Dover (PLATE 8, PAGE 26).



Plate 15

Little Creek Canning Company, 1899, courtesy of the Anold family.

Community canneries of this size typically employed local women to prepare the product while the regular staff of men made and sealed the cans. The man at far left is holding a capping iron, indicating that this plant did not boast the most up-to-date canning equipment.

First row, left to right: Louise Dillahay, Sarah Jane Smith, Annie Spencer, Lula Dare, Mrs. Ratledge, Sally Carrow, Isaac Short (born 1897), Mary Short (Isaac's mother). Second Row: Anna Mae Carter (Albert's sister), Ida Richardson, Elizabeth Richardson (Ida's mother), Frances Buckson, Lizzie Blocksom, Sophia Anold (born 1888), Sadie Wellington, May Blocksom, Ida Harrington. Third Row: Walter Pleasanton (holding capping iron), unknown person bending over, James Ratledge, Mr. White (foreman), John Seery, Fanny Muncy, unknown man in doorway, Mame Anderson, ... Clark, Viola Anold, Ella Ratledge, Sam Richardson (peering over shoulder), Lizzie Dillahay, Eddie Burris, Jennie Price, Albert Carter.

Factors in cannery site selection

Popular perception for more than a century in Delaware has insisted that towns without railroads suffered a disadvantage. Smyrna, Camden, and Odessa, to name but three, are traditionally said to have declined because Clayton, Wyoming, and Middletown were the railroad towns and they were not. The facts differ. All six towns had canneries, and all six prospered during the cannery era in varying degrees that do not appear to be related to rail transportation.

The railroad was a perceived advantage, more than an actual advantage, from a purely commercial point of view. In the end, perception won, and the rail towns appeared to be more alive and progressive, thereby attracting more progressive elements of the population. In each of these three cases, a legend arose, stating that the older town had rejected the railroad; in fact, Smyrna, Camden, and Odessa actually had campaigned to get the railroad but were bypassed because the engineers chose a more inland route to avoid bridging tidal streams. Smyrna, Camden, and Odessa depended primarily upon steamboat service, even though Smyrna and Odessa briefly had branch-line rail service as well

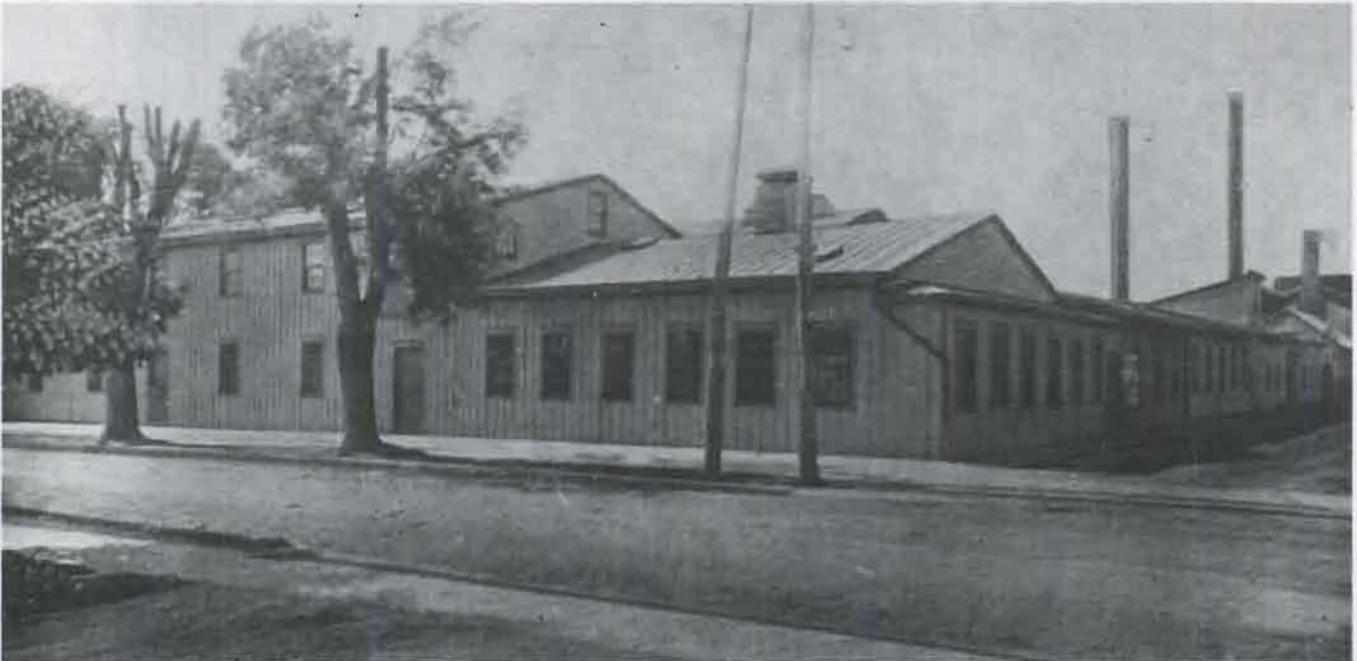


Plate 16

Stetson and Ellison's second cannery on Commerce Street in Camden, on the site now occupied by the firehouse. This plant was built after the first plant on another site nearby was destroyed by fire.

Comparisons of civic attitudes between Middletown and Odessa can be repeated throughout the state, but these two towns stand in particularly sharp contrast. At the middle of the nineteenth century, Middletown and Odessa were about equal. Each boasted a hotel, a tannery, a wagon shop, and similar local-service industries. When the Delaware Rail Road came in 1855, Middletown blossomed proudly with civic accomplishment as Odessa self-consciously shrank. Soon Middletown was three times the size of Odessa, even though Odessa shipped more peaches in 1868 than the other Delaware ports combined (*Middletown Transcript*, March 21, 1868). Both towns built public buildings, but in Odessa they were frame and in Middletown they were brick. Defensive Odessans expressed pride in their civic improvements "...notwithstanding we have no railroad." (Harriet Tatman to John Cochran, May 22, 1857, Cochran-Pool papers)

In St. George's Hundred during the railroad era, Middletown was commonly referred to as the "new" town, even though it was much older than Odessa. Even in the current generation, Middletown has celebrated its foundation from its 1861 charter, when it was already two centuries old. Odessa is perceived and advertised today as old, quaint, and Colonial, even though it has fewer eighteenth-century buildings than Middletown.



Plate 17

The 1880 J. M. Chambers cannery in Dover, near the Delaware Rail Road depot on Loockerman Street, from a wood engraving.

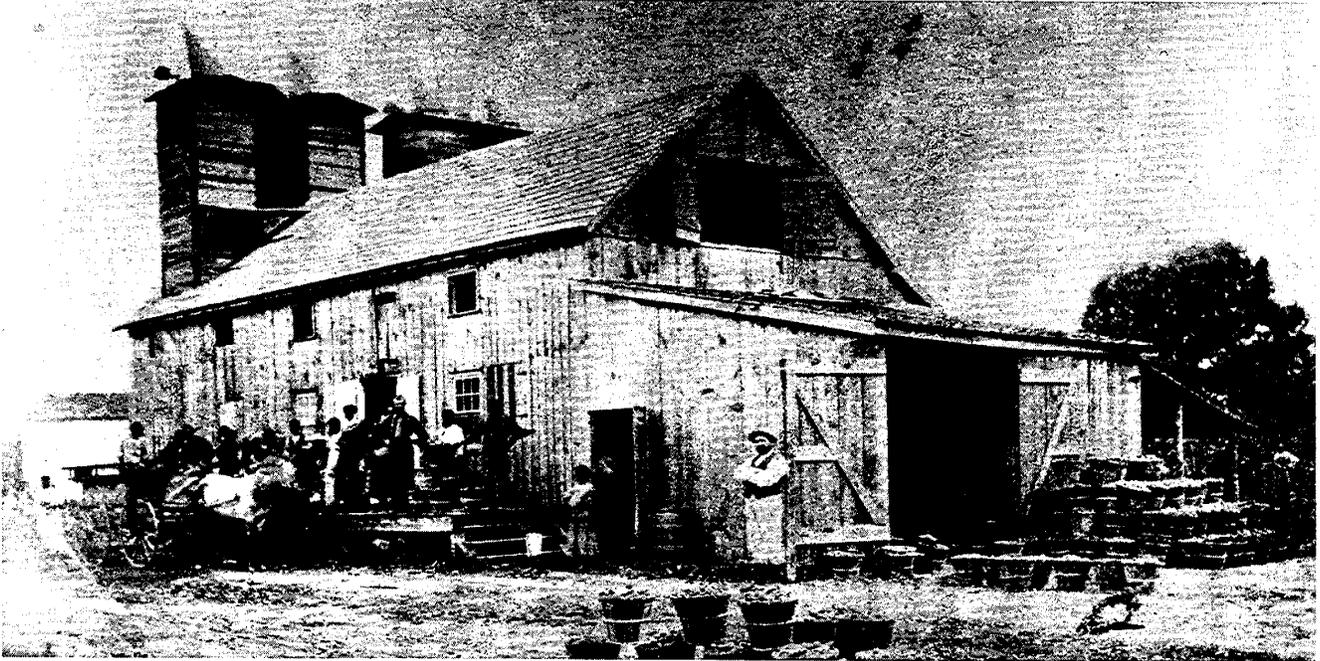


Plate 18

Evaporation as a food preserving method predated canning by thousands of years, but evaporators were found throughout the region even as canning grew to unprecedented scale. Charles Barker's evaporating plant at Milford, begun in 1875. From 1882, the plant had four evaporators, with a capacity of 500 baskets a day. It employed 75 hands in season. At the same time, the proprietors of the Lebanon cannery were operating an evaporator, which probably resembled this plant.

Modernization and Advantage

Why do perceptions run so contrary to historical fact? The answer may lie in a group of concepts lumped under the name of "modernization." Attention to time and timeliness, codified division of labor, and demand for rapid news communication are among the concepts included under the title of modernization.

Railroad towns enjoyed one feature peculiar to modern society: rapid communication. Shippers along railroads could deal directly with ultimate buyers in distant cities (Townsend Papers, Delaware Archives). Waterborne goods, on the other hand, were shipped to Philadelphia, New York, or other ports, where they fell into the hands of brokers. Goods from Lebanon were at different times handled by New York and Philadelphia grocery houses, who effectively controlled the market. The Philadelphia wholesale market included Pittsburgh, Cincinnati, St. Louis, Louisville, and later Chicago (Conzen 1981:342).



Plate 19

Third plant of the Richardson and Robbins company in Dover, on a site later occupied by the Hotel Richardson and now by Wilmington Trust Company. From a stereoptican view, Courtesy William P. Richardson

Railroad towns, with their telegraphs, were more modern in the sense that "modern" refers to a stage of cultural evolution in which timely news, communication, and speed are valued more highly than in earlier periods. Timely news was available only at railroad towns, which also enjoyed not only telegraph but daily mail and newspapers, thanks to the trains. Steamboat towns, and other towns without railroads, seldom had telegraph service or daily mail.

Lebanon was therefore doomed – or perceived to be doomed; which has the same effect – to reduced status among places. As the port for a town with no railroad, it could not attract the entrepreneurial spirits who were being attracted to central places with railroads. Even Camden, closer to the railroad, enjoyed more initial advantages, since Lebanon without a cannery was just a landing, but Camden lay at the intersection of two major roads.

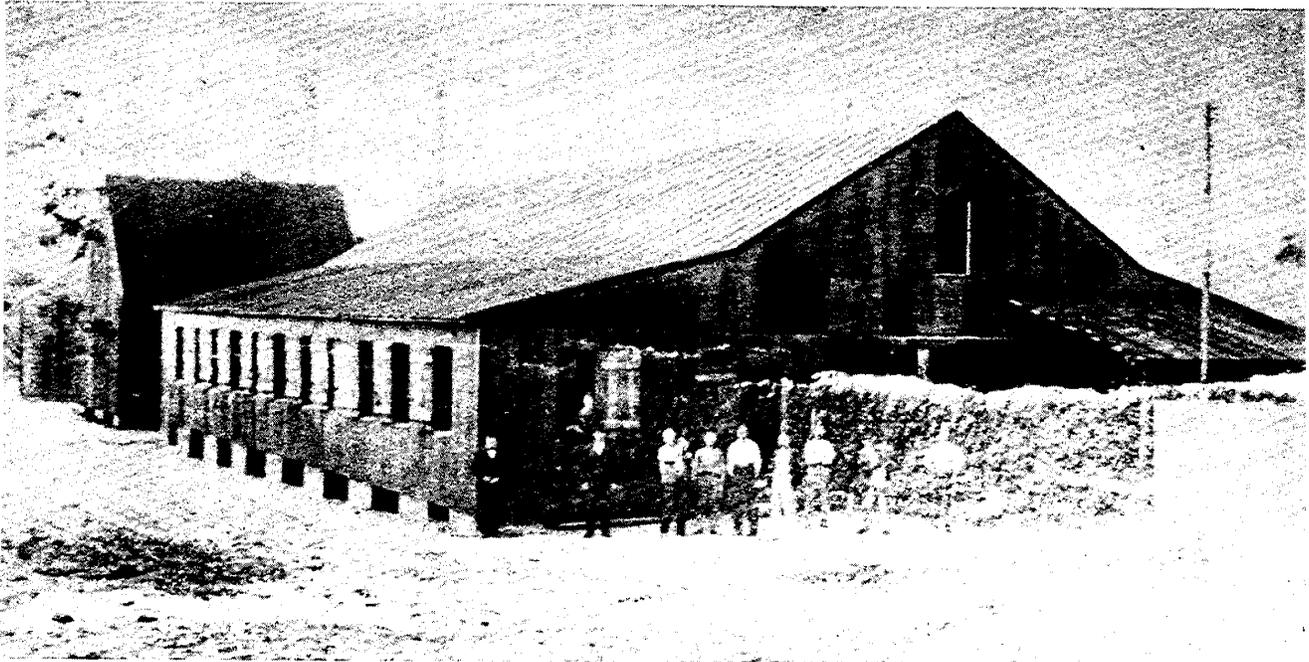


Plate 20

J. T. Postles cannery, Frederica, during the last decade of the nineteenth century. There is no sign of a can-making shop above the building, which had wings on the two sides, like the one in Lebanon. The lack of window glass indicates that the building was not used during the winter. The L-shaped brick corner pier resembles ones found at Lebanon.

By the end of the nineteenth century, the biggest and most prosperous canneries were clustered around the railroad towns and a few steamboat stops, such as Frederica, Odessa, and Fleming's Landing, along the more navigable rivers. Lebanon, far up the tortuous St. Jones, served only briefly as a cannery site before the steamboat trade was fully developed.

Economic incentives for canning in Delaware

The first canners were tinsmiths who developed methods that could be followed by workmen who would never become skilled craftsmen. The first canners at Dover, Camden, and Milford, who introduced the technology into Kent County, were all tinsmiths from New Bedford, Massachusetts. New Bedford had fallen from prominence; the California gold rush had diverted whaling ships to the California trade; competition from petroleum had reduced the need for canned whale oil, and much of the New Bedford fleet sailed from Pacific ports to exploit the Bering Sea fisheries (Morison 1961: 333). New Bedford's economic hard times, therefore, proved to be Kent County's springboard to prosperity.

When professional tinsmiths ran canneries, innovation could be expected to continue; other products came out of the shops during off seasons. The plants in Camden and Dover continued to make architectural tin, special containers, and other tin goods even after their primary businesses had become food canning. The canners who obtained patents and advanced the craft were the old tinsmiths.

Since downstate Delaware was economically and socially part of the Philadelphia hinterland, Delaware canners could be expected to benefit from that city's expansion with the completion of transcontinental railroad system. Philadelphia was the eastern terminus of the Pennsylvania Railroad, which in 1869 obtained lines to both Chicago and St. Louis, opening continental markets in the arid west for Delmarva's fruit and vegetable producers.

Delaware's rail link, the Delaware Rail Road Company, was leased to the Philadelphia, Baltimore and Washington, which was in turn a subsidiary part of the Pennsylvania system. From the other end of the line, Libby McNeill and Libby was formed in 1868 in Chicago to can meat for shipment; they would later own Stetson and Ellison and other Delmarva canneries (Minchinton 1957:256). H. J. Heinz started his Pittsburgh pickle operation in 1869 as well (Alberts 1973:8)

In fact, it was the Baltimore area that provided the most absentee owners for the Delaware canning industry, even though many of the canners' agents were Philadelphians, as in the case of the Lebanon cannery. The Maryland owners were located along the PB&W [Pennsylvania] in such places as Aberdeen and Havre de Grace (TABLE 4) and may in fact have been part of the Pennsylvania western trade.

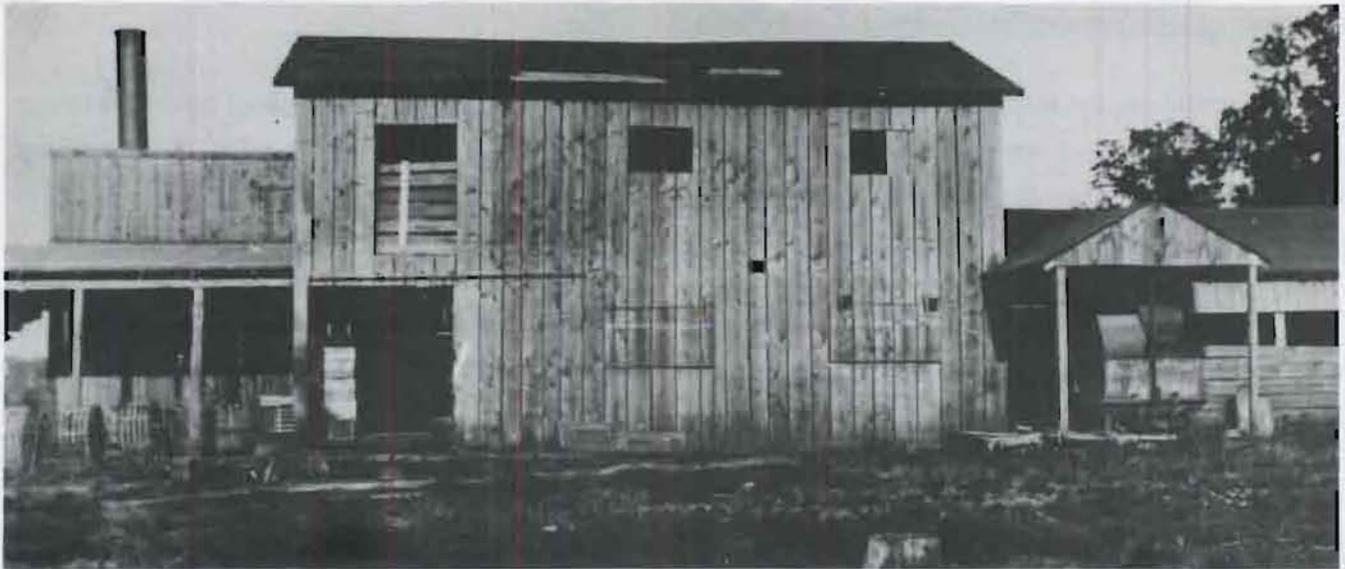
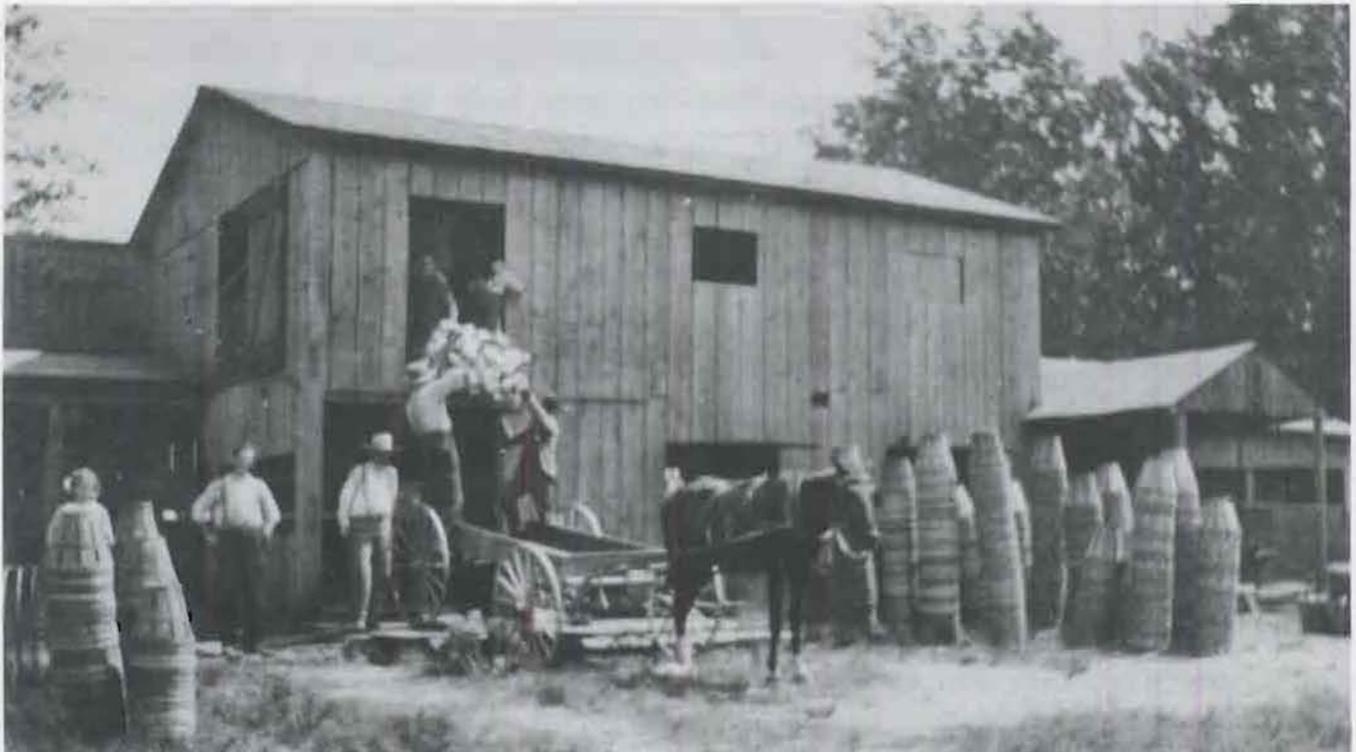


Plate 21

The cannery at Viola, above, was typical of the small seasonal plants that were common in Delaware. In the open shed at right was the scalding apparatus, consisting of two steel baskets that were lowered into hot water. Below is a view of typical preparations at Viola. Baskets are stacked on the ground and workmen are delivering empty cans to the loft, since the plant did not make its own cans.

Plate 22



Beginnings of Canning in Central Kent County

Commercial-quantity canning in Delaware began when two young New England tinsmiths set up shops and branched out into food processing. There had been earlier experiments, but Delaware folklore insists that the mighty Delaware canning industry began in Alden Richardson's kitchen in 1856. Richardson himself perpetuated the legend in later years.

Alden B. Richardson and George M. Stetson were brothers-in-law, tinsmiths who had lived in New Bedford, Massachusetts where they had learned their trade. They came to Delaware and set up shop first in Wilmington and then at Camden, making and selling tinware.

After a short time, in 1853, Richardson moved to Dover and they both took new partners, forming the firms of Stetson and Ellison at Camden and of Richardson and Robbins at Dover. Richardson and Robbins established a separate cannery business in 1856. Although Stetson and Ellison are said to have made cans among other tinwares in 1856, their cannery was not founded until 1864, by which time Richardson and Robbins were already well established. Richardson and Robbins first packed poultry products in 1865, and continued for a century thereafter. Staple products of R&R over the years were boned chicken, chicken soup, hams, plum pudding, all products that did not depend upon seasonal crops. The physical plant and working conditions at "Richardson's factory" were therefore different from other nineteenth-century canners.

These two firms would be among the most stable, enduring, and successful of Delaware canning firms, as well as the most innovative during their early years. Later, they would be among the most conservative. An observer who knew the R&R firm in its later years called it a "one telephone" plant, where the firm's president conducted all the business in the old autocratic manner.

Stetson and Ellison and Richardson and Robbins eventually were absorbed by larger and more progressive canners, which closed the last of their operations about twenty years ago. Of all the Kent County canneries, only the Wheatley operation at Clayton remains open, as a freezer plant of the Campbell Soup Company. Those vegetable canneries that survive today employ freezing to preserve crops and keep plants running when fresh vegetables are unavailable. Purely seasonal canning has all but vanished.

The Camden and Dover canners continued to make cans and use hole-in-cap technology after the sanitary can was introduced. A Stetson and Ellison letter of 1915, now in the Delaware State Museum collection, indicates that the company was buying hole-and-cap cans from an outside source. Although Richardson and Robbins eventually adopted the modern can, some specialty cans continued to be handmade; its can shop equipment remained intact until about 1965, when it was bought by a collector and moved to Lubec, Maine (Rier 1985).

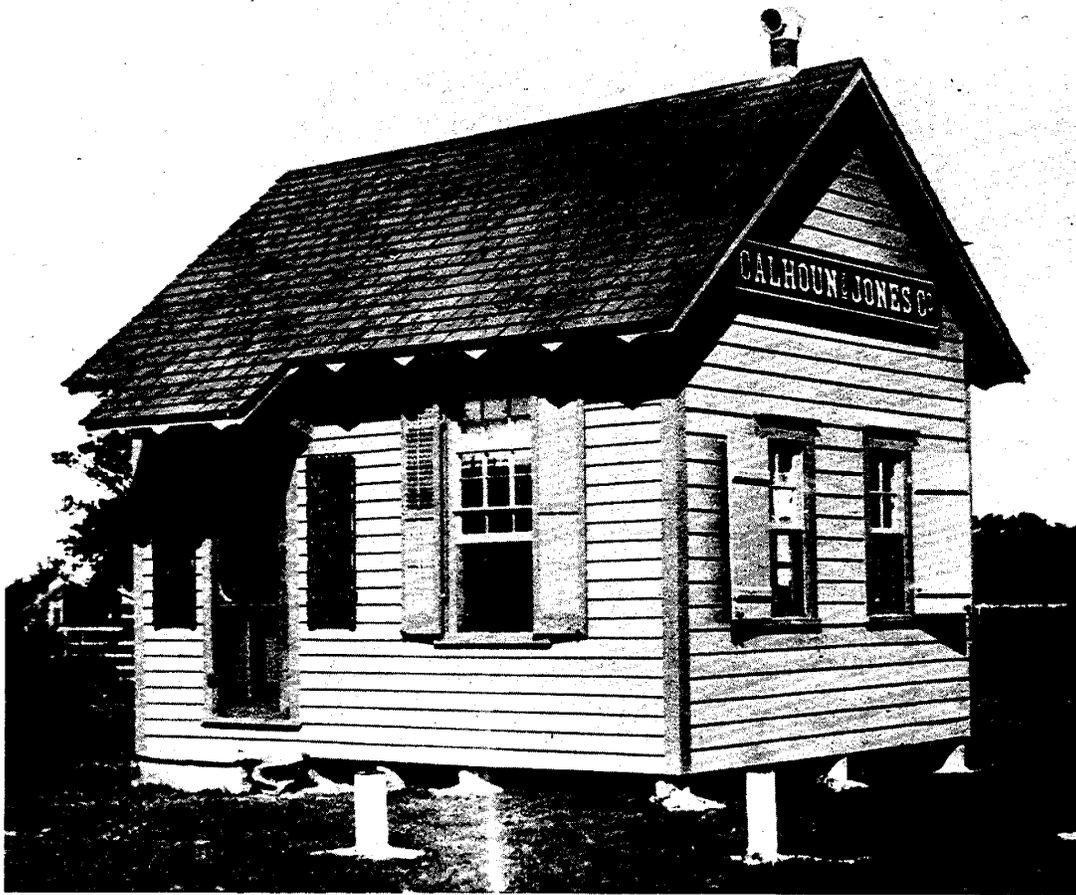


Plate 23

Office of the Calhoun and Jones cannery on Race Street in Georgetown, Delaware. The plant also manufactured fertilizers. Separate offices were standard fire protection measures; the one at Lebanon may have resembled this one. Courtesy of Virginia Chipman Boyer.

Some smaller nineteenth-century canneries (Plate 21, page 45) bought cans from outside manufacturers, but most canneries were also can shops until the first decade of the twentieth century, when the "sanitary" can was introduced. The end of can making meant a shift in the workforce. Thereafter, canneries would operate on a strictly seasonal basis unless they canned meat products that were available year round. In 1865, Richardson and Robbins first packed chicken and turkey, as their advertising proclaimed, "expressly for Excursionists and Travellers for their luncheons."

Cannery Fires

When canneries made their own cans, they were year-round operations, heated in the winter by the fires necessary to melt the solder. Each can maker had a bench, equipped with a gasoline, coal gas, or charcoal heater. Since the can shops were generally in the open frame cannery buildings, they presented a very real year-round fire danger. To minimize the impact of fires, canneries often were housed in several buildings with room between to prevent the spread of a destructive fire; this was the case at Lebanon.

Frequent cannery fires were a fact of life. The insurance records are filled with amendments to fire insurance policies recorded the rapid growth of factories, punctuated by conflagrations. Insurance companies responded by re-insuring the canneries with several companies, spreading the risk throughout the insurance industry. The insurance declaration for the Richardson and Robbins plant of 1881 was a printed pamphlet, which the Kent County Mutual company distributed to other companies for their participation.

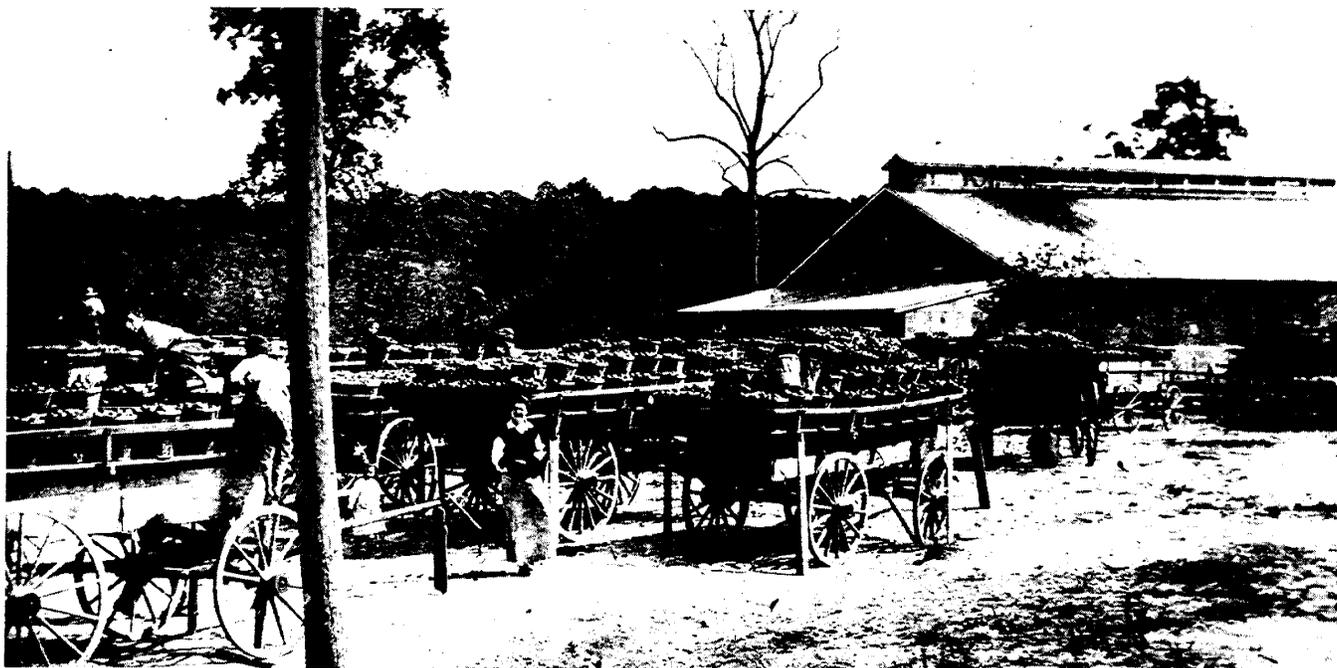


Plate 24

Wagons full of tomatoes lined up at the Winters and Prophet Canning Company in Milton. This memorable backup in 1913 occurred when a boiler breakdown halted the canning operation. Canneries were typically taken apart and rebuilt between seasons, in an effort to avoid such breakdowns. Some canneries, notably Richardson and Robbins, had redundant boiler systems for this reason. The Lebanon cannery always had more than one boiler.

During the early days of the industry, a burned plant would be rebuilt bigger and better after a fire. These were years of expansion, when plants frequently were modified between seasons. Stetson and Ellison moved out of the proprietor's backyard following the 1884 fire to a new plant west of Camden (PLATE 16), where the present Camden-Wyoming fire house stands. It was the 1884 fire that inspired establishment of the Camden fire company. Dover's Robbins Hose Company is named for a canner whose company financed its establishment.

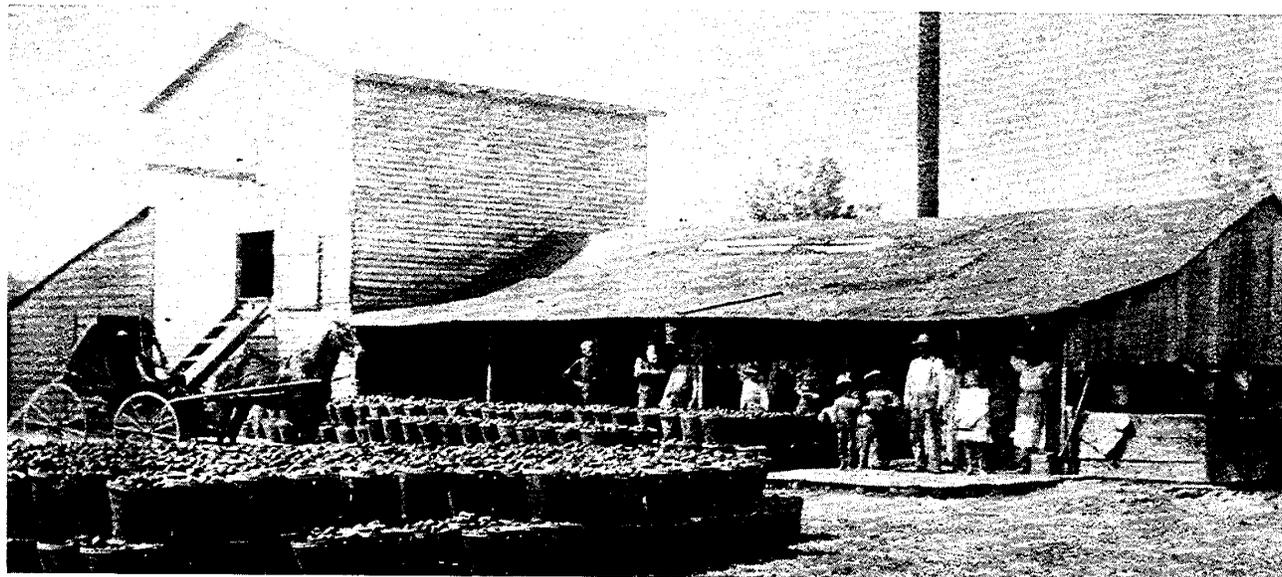


Plate 25

Cannery of William McClintock ("Clink") Minner at Masten's Corner, Delaware, about 1905. The Minner enterprises in this area included a basket factory, another important adjunct of the canning trade. Masten's Corner had neither rail nor navigation. Photo courtesy Alice Minner Knapp.

Ancillary Industries

Each cannery was the center of a cluster of economic activity, including a number of trades and industries required to support it. Aside from the farms and their support systems, there were machine shops, gas works, and shipping companies that revolved around the canning industry. The Diamond State Telephone Company began when Senator H. A. Richardson recognized the need for communication between his plants and his suppliers, notably the E. L. Jones machine shop.

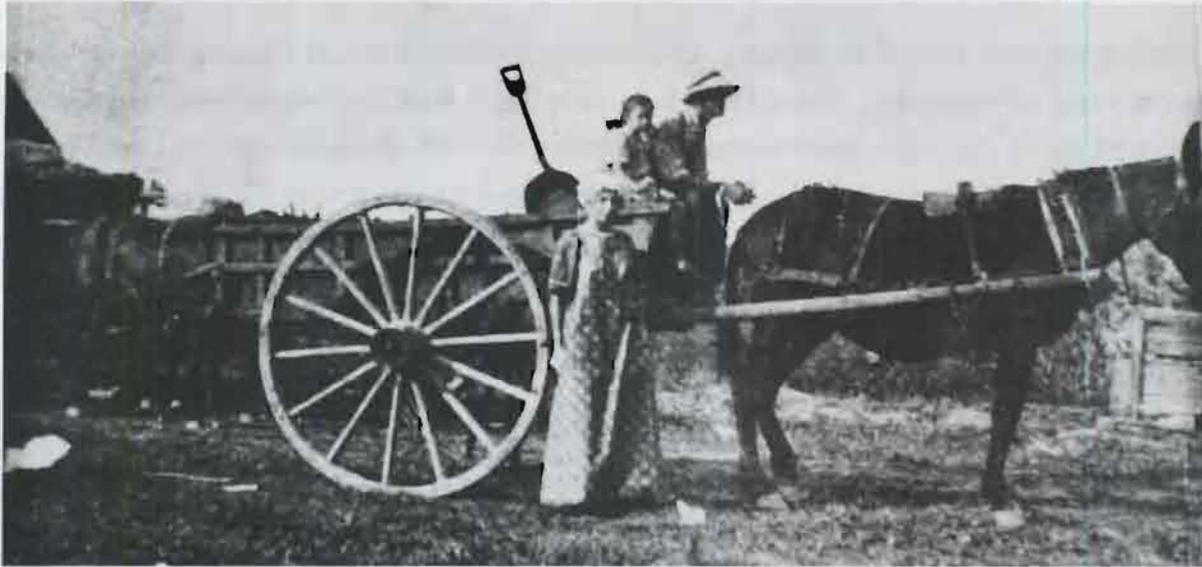


Plate 26

Waste products of canning have been valuable as animal feed and for other purposes. This dump wagon full of tomato skins had just called at the J. Colby Smith cannery in Willow Grove, Delaware. Alfred Ford and his daughter Priscilla are on the wagon, and his stepdaughter Beatrice Bennett stands by. Cannery waste is still used as animal feed, sometimes on farms owned by canners. Can-making waste from Lebanon was used to fill holes in roads.

E. L. Jones was born in Bridgeton, New Jersey, in 1853, at the beginning of the canning industry's growth period. He learned the machinist's trade at the Ferracute factory in Bridgeton, which manufactured can-makers' presses and other equipment for the canning trade. Under the sponsorship of Richardson and Robbins, he moved to Dover in 1881 and established a machine shop and foundry at the corner of North and New streets, near the location of the Dover Gas Light Company. The foundry and machine shop made "can makers tools, foot presses, dies, square shears, solder molds and cutters, forming rolls, solder blocks and coppers, springs, parts of dies, etc." (*Delawarean* August 13, 1881) The original partnership of Jones and Howell was dissolved and E. L. Jones and Company moved to a site on Forest Street (PLATE 8) where it operated almost as long as the cannery.

Dover Gas Light Company, ancestor of the present Chesapeake Utilities Corporation, was established as a rosin gas plant in 1859 and purchased in 1867 by A. B. Richardson, who converted it to make coal gas.

Both Stetson and Ellison and the Lebanon cannery owned schooners before the Rising Sun cannery interests established a steamboat line between Lebanon and Philadelphia. Canneries supported the steamboats, which in turn played a role in their communities similar to the railroads' role among the inland communities. On the Murderkill the *Frederica* served that town's canneries and the *Clio* (PLATE 12) carried canned goods from Odessa to Philadelphia. Interlocking ownership of the steamers and canners meant that a community's fortunes were virtually dependent upon the fluctuating fortunes of a single business.



Plate 27

John S. Collins, about 1928



Plate 28

Capt. John C. Durborough

Two pioneers of Kent County canning are shown in their natural surroundings. John S. Collins later developed Miami Beach, where he is shown in this picture near the end of his life. Captain John C. Durborough, a member of the Rising Sun firm, was also master of the *Mary U. Githens*.