

APPENDIX 3

DETERMINATION OF ELIGIBILITY

THE CANNERY SITE WAS DETERMINED by the State Historic Preservation Officer to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The following is a summary of the contents of the National Register of Historic Places registration form that was filed in connection with the action:

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name	Collins, Geddes and Company Cannery Site
other names/site number	K-522, 7K-C-14 (archæological site) K-3265 (duplex apartment)

2. Location

	West of County Road 356a and North of Road 26
city, town	Unincorporated village of Lebanon Delaware Kent County

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property
public-State	site

7. Description

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Collins, Geddes and Company cannery site is located northwest of the intersection of County Road 356a and County Road 26, on a low bluff that rises about 20 feet above the valley of St. Jones River. The site consists of three parts. On the south is a duplex apartment house and its associated lawn and outbuilding; approximately one-half of the house and lot are within the historic boundaries of the site. The northern part of the site consists of an overgrown field, bounded on the north by a gravel pit, on the west by cultivated farmland, and on the east by the bluff. The third element of the site's present configuration consists of a steep bluff separating the cannery site from the road below; this bluff is the cannery waste dump site.

Between 1869 and 1884, the level ground at the top of the bluff, approximately two acres, was occupied by a cannery. The slope to the east was used as a dump for discarded wastes from the can-making process. The cannery building, in its largest configuration, was a two-story frame building, parallel to the bluff and near its edge, 216 feet long and 44 feet wide, including its shed wings. Adjacent to the main building was a fruit cooking room 32 feet square; a catsup-making shed 40 by 18 feet, and a boiler house. Nearby stood two boarding houses for employees, an office, and a building for receiving fruit and storing boxes and baskets. After a fire in 1874, the main structure was rebuilt, only to burn again in 1884.

The boiler room had a basement, but other structures in the complex were built on piers or light footings. The second floor of the main cannery building was devoted to a can-making shop. An overhead conveyor system from the factory to the dock below carried goods over the road (now Road 356a) to waiting ships.

Owners:

Brock and Ether Parker
Rudnick and Sons
Jacob Holmes
Delaware Department of Transportation

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria D

Areas of Significance	Period of Significance
Commerce	1869-1884

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The site of the Collins, Geddes and Company cannery is significant under criterion D, because it has yielded important information about the can-making industry at a critical period in its development.

This is the first site at which archæologists have availed themselves of an opportunity to study the industrial process of can manufacture. Because can-making waste lay in an undisturbed, relatively well-preserved deposit, it was possible to reconstruct archæologically the can-making methods during a period between craft tinsmithing and totally machine manufacture.

Archæological tests have determined that the cannery site has not been disturbed since the buildings burned in 1884. The cellar of the boiler room was tested and found to be undisturbed. The entire site west of the can dump has been cultivated, but the only construction is part of a duplex apartment house that encroaches on the southern edge of the site, away from the site of the main cannery.

The cannery was built in 1869 and burned in 1874 and 1884; the site was then cultivated until a duplex apartment house was built about twenty years ago. Tests demonstrated that the waste pile possesses a very high level of integrity, while the site of the main building has suffered only slight disturbance that is normal in plowed sites.

Background history

The Collins, Geddes cannery was built in 1869-1870 and burned twice, in 1874 and 1884. Like other canneries of the period, it was also a can-making factory.

Most of the two-acre complex consisted of lightly-built wooden buildings, used only during the tomato, peach, and apple canning season from mid-summer to fall. The second floor of the main building was a year-round can facility, where semi-skilled workmen made cans for the next season. An overhead tramway or chute carried cases of acned goods down the hill from the factory to the wharf below.

Can-makers required charcoal braziers to melt their solder, and the canning process involved steaming and boiling the product. Cannery fires were therefore a constant hazard. Some urban canneries were masonry, but the typical Delaware country cannery was a frame shed, subject to frequent fires.

Waste from can-making was tossed over the side of the bluff, onto property owned by local shipping interests.

After the second fire, the cannery never reopened. The site eventually was reclaimed for farming. About twenty years ago, a duplex apartment house was built on the south half of the site, while the northern part was allowed to grow up in trees.

Archaeological investigations

The prehistoric component of this site, previously recorded under the number 7K-C-14, was surveyed by the late H. Geiger Omwake, as well as by local avocational archaeologists. Artifacts of the Archaic period are found in the field regularly.

During investigations in advance of reconstruction work on Road 356a, Edward and Louise Heite examined the Collins, Geddes and Company cannery site, which lies along the twenty-foot bluff overlooking the St. Jones River. Test pits on the bluff identified the cellar of the boiler room and features associated with the main cannery building. Chips of chert found in tests throughout the site indicated that the cannery site is superimposed upon the eastern part of the known prehistoric component. Only one point, a tip fragment of brown chert, was found in the testing.

Evidence indicated that the cannery buildings were thoroughly robbed out and demolished. No whole bricks were found among the several deposits of rubble. The cellar hole was intentionally filled with yellow soil, which apparently had been brought from elsewhere for the purpose. There was no evidence that later structures had intruded into the site.

Over the side of the hill was a solid mass of deteriorated tinsplate, about forty feet long, three or four feet deep, and ten feet across. This was the waste from can manufacture, thrown over the side between 1870 and 1882, when can manufacture ceased.

Technological context

Tin cans as a method of keeping food were introduced in America about 1818, but canned foods did not immediately find a niche in the grocery market. Cans were expensive, since a canmaker could produce only about sixty cans per day by traditional tinkers' techniques.

By the decade of the Civil War, canmaking had become streamlined. There were stamping machines to shape the ends, shears to cut the sides, and specialized canmaking workbenches that were more efficient than older tinsmiths' general purpose benches.

Each cannery made its own containers, individually and laboriously. Occasional innovations helped to streamline the process, but it remained a craft throughout the nineteenth century. Each labor-saving innovation slightly de-skilled the process, carrying the canmaker farther along the road from skilled craftsmen to industrial operative. By 1880, a team of two workers could produce as many as 1500 cans a day.

True factory production of cans began after 1900, when the Max Ams open-top can machinery was adopted. Within ten years can manufacture had become a separate trade dominated by a few huge companies.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property: 2.5 (by deed record)

Verbal boundary Description

Two parcels:

Parcel one consists of a tract 38 feet wide and 231 feet long, parallel to Road 356a, bounded on the eastward by the former course of the road and on the west by parcel two.

Parcel two consists of the original cannery lot, as described in deeds: beginning at a corner stone on a hill and near and old mill race, which was a corner for the land Bennett Dyer bought from Daniel Mifflin; thence along the hill south one-quarter east, 14 poles (231 feet) to a corner of Daniel Mifflin's lot, later of the steamboat company; thence south eighty and three quarters degrees east 2.3 poles (38 feet) to the public road, now Road 356a; then with the road south two and a quarter degrees west six poles (49 feet) to another corner on the road; thence north sixty-nine and three-quarters degrees west 22 poles (363 feet) to a corner post; thence north twenty and one quarter degrees east 18.42 poles (303.9 feet) to a corner on the former mill seat; thence along the mill seat to the beginning, south sixty-nine and three-quarters degrees east 13 poles (214.5 feet).

[Kent County Deed Book N-5, page 486, May 25, 1869, and later deeds]

Boundary Justification

Parcel two is the original cannery lot, on which the buildings stood. Parcel one is part of the former steamboat company lot, where can-making trash was excavated by Heite and Heite. Site boundaries are derived from nineteenth-century deed descriptions.

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