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Cheesemaking in Wisconsin

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CHEESEMAKING IN WISCONSIN

A SHORT HISTORY

THE MARSCHALL DAIRY LABORATORY
MADISON, WISCONSIN

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Union Star
Cheese
Factory*

*Winnebago
County*

∴ FOREWORD ∴

WISCONSIN occupies first place in the world of dairying today. In number of cows, in volume of milk produced, and in the quantity of dairy products turned out in her factories, she outranks any other state.

Especially in the production of cheese does Wisconsin hold first sway, and the steady, continuous growth of the cheese industry in the state indicates that she will not easily give up her title of "the World's Greatest Cheesemaker."

A phase of recent development has been the direction of increased attention toward the value of clean, sanitary, well-equipped manufacturing plants. Believing that con-

sideration should be given equally to outside and inside appearances, the Marschall Dairy Laboratory announced a "Beautify Your Surroundings Contest" for Wisconsin cheesemakers in the Spring of 1923. So gratifying were the results that another Contest was carried on this year, and even greater interest was aroused.

Pictures of some of the entries in the contests, showing typical Wisconsin factories of today have been combined in this little booklet with a sketch of the development of the cheese industry in the State from its first small beginnings. It is hoped that the result will prove of interest to the reader.

THE MARSCHALL DAIRY LABORATORY.

December, 1924.

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



Rozellville
Cheese
Factory

Marathon
County

CHEESEMAKING IN WISCONSIN

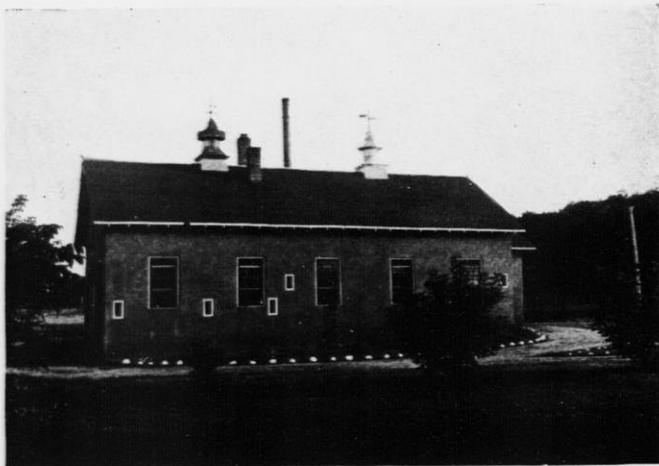
Nineteen hundred twenty-four marks the sixtieth anniversary of the erection of the first cheese factory in Wisconsin. In 1864, at Ladoga in Fond du Lac County, Chester Hazen put up the building which was the forerunner of the 2,500 cheese factories that dot the Wisconsin landscape today.

History does not tell by whom the first cheese was made in Wisconsin—perhaps the honor belongs to the wife of the first pioneer who brought with him a cow. John Smith, who came from New York to Wisconsin in 1844, appears to have made the first attempt at commercial cheesemak-

ing in the State, however, when in 1858 he began to collect curd from his neighbors and press it into cheese. His method did not prove very satisfactory, and after a year's experience he abandoned the business.

When John Smith ceased his cheesemaking operations, his brother Hiram, who lived on a farm across the road, began to take in milk from the neighbors to be made into cheese. This plan succeeded better. Cash was paid for the milk or a percentage of the finished product retained as payment for the making. The

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*Nye
Cheese
Factory*

*Polk
County*

name of Hiram Smith was destined to occupy an important place in the history of Wisconsin dairying.

The example of Hiram Smith was followed by other dairymen, among them Hiram Conver, a brother-in-law who lived in the same township, and A. D. De Land who moved into the county in 1864 and settled on a farm southwest of the village of Sheboygan Falls. De Land installed a cheesemaking outfit in part of a new building that had been intended for a barn and began making cheese out of milk from his own herd and those of his neighbors. The business grew and he finally built a factory from which cheese was sent to all parts of the country. De Land continued to manu-

facture cheese until 1891 when he decided to devote himself entirely to the cheese-dealing business and founded the firm which still bears his name.

The first building in Sheboygan County erected especially for operation as a cheese factory was put up in 1867 by L. P. Fischer and M. McKinnon, two and one-half miles west of Sheboygan Falls. After two years of successful operation, the factory was sold to Hiram Smith. This factory is still in operation.

Pioneer farmers in other sections of the State were not far behind those of Sheboygan County in realizing the possibilities for development of a cheese industry in Wisconsin. Early records tell that a mammoth

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Town Line
Cheese
Factory*

*Waupaca
County*

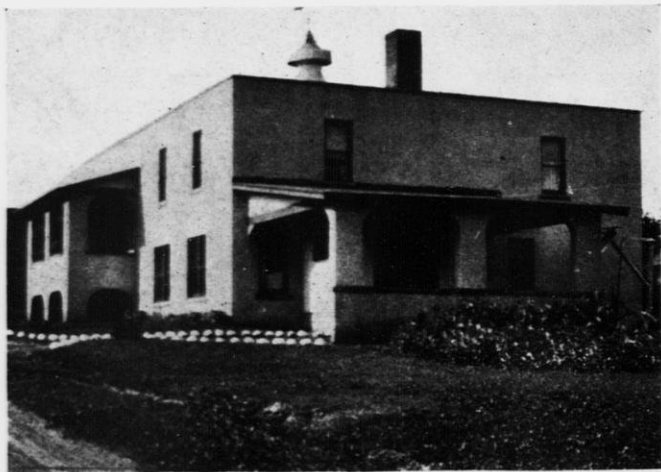
cheese weighing 1,620 pounds was manufactured by J. V. Robbins of Madison and exhibited at the State Fair in 1860, attracting much attention. "It had every appearance of being excellent in quality and certainly no larger cheese had ever been made in America," wrote the Fair Secretary in his annual report. Although this huge cheese appears to have been made in Mr. Robbins' home dairy, most certainly the milk from many herds entered into it.

Chester Hazen came to Wisconsin in March, 1845. The next year he preempted eighty acres of land near the Village of Oakfield, Fond du Lac County, and the year following that, one hundred sixty acres in the Town of Springvale. In 1850

he built a house upon the land and settled down to what was to be a distinguished career as a dairyman. Believing strongly in the merits of Ayrshire cattle for dairy purposes, he did much to introduce this breed.

Mr. Hazen early realized the advantages of the factory system of cheesemaking, which had been introduced in New York State by Jesse Williams in 1851, and when in 1864 he saw his herd and those of many of the neighbors well developed, Hazen decided to erect on his farm a building especially for the manufacture of cheese. The Ladoga Factory, first cheese factory in the State, was the result. It was a success from the beginning and before long was

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Maple Grove
Cheese
Factory*

*Waupaca
County*

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924

*Hillside
Cheese
Factory*

*Shawano
County*



Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Dawson
Cheese
Factory*

*Green
County*

receiving the milk from a thousand cows. Other factories sprang up and divided the patronage as time went on but the Ladoga factory held place for a number of years as the largest in the State. It continued to operate until 1891 when a creamery was erected nearby to take its place.

In the years immediately following the erection of the factory at Ladoga, cheese factories multiplied rapidly. In 1866 Stephen Faville built a factory at Lake Mills, which was the first co-operative factory in Southern Wisconsin. Milk was received from the herds of A. D. and Elijah Faville, Henry C. Drake and others. The Cold Spring Factory at Whitewater opened soon after and in 1867 won first prize for

factory-made cheese at the State Fair held in Madison—the earliest competition among Wisconsin factorymen on record.

At the annual meeting of the State Agricultural Society in February, 1870, it was reported that there had been "scarcely less than 50 factories in operation" in 1869, and 77 factories were listed by name in the Annual Report of the Society for 1870. Twenty of these were in Kenosha County, eight in Fond du Lac County, eight in Sheboygan County and from one to six in Dane, Dodge, Grant, Green, Green Lake, Jefferson, Lafayette, La Crosse, Monroe, Outagamie, Richland, Rock, Sauk, Walworth and Waukesha Counties. The Cold Spring Factory alone produced 191,000 pounds of

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Maple Grove
Cheese
Factory*

*Winnebago
County*

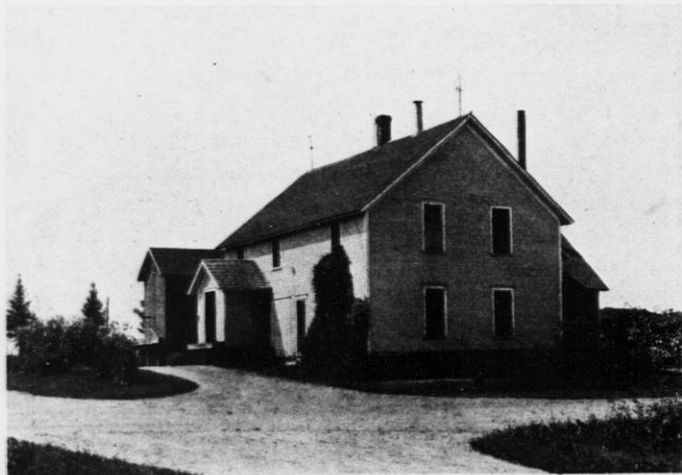
cheese that year and the factory at Ladoga only 5,000 pounds less.

The development of the "foreign cheese" industry in Southwestern Wisconsin had its beginning in 1870. A little band of Swiss colonists had settled in the northern part of Green County in 1845, founding the Village of New Glarus. Accustomed to the daily use of cheese in the mountain-land they had left behind, these people soon attempted the manufacture of their favorite cheese in their new home. The making was strictly a household affair, however, each family producing just enough cheese for its own use and there was no thought of commercial manufacture. Wheat was the principal crop, but

with the end of the war, wheat raising began to be unprofitable. Then followed the ravages of the chinch bug and the plight of the wheat-growers became desperate.

The first suggestion that the rough hillsides, unsuited as they were to corn-raising, would be particularly adapted for dairy development seems to have come from outsiders. Nicholas Gerber, a cheese dealer from New York, visited the section in 1870 and was so impressed that he established three factories, two for the production of Limburger cheese and one for Swiss. Milk was purchased at an agreed price, which satisfied the farmers, and the plan was a success. There was a rush to start

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



Hull
Cheese
Factory

Marathon
County

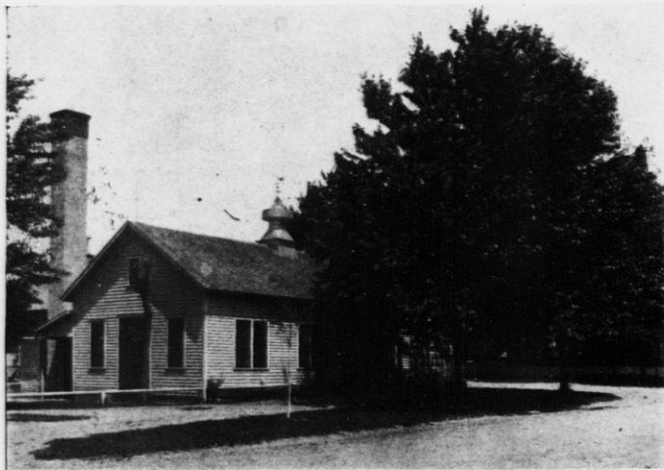
Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924

*Twin
Cheese
Factory*

*Waupaca
County*



Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Nicholson
Cheese
Factory*

*Waupaca
County*

new factories the next year. Those located in the rougher parts of the County were devoted principally to the making of Limburger Cheese, but in the more level northeastern corner American cheese factories were established and soon took a firm hold. Most of the factories were co-operative.

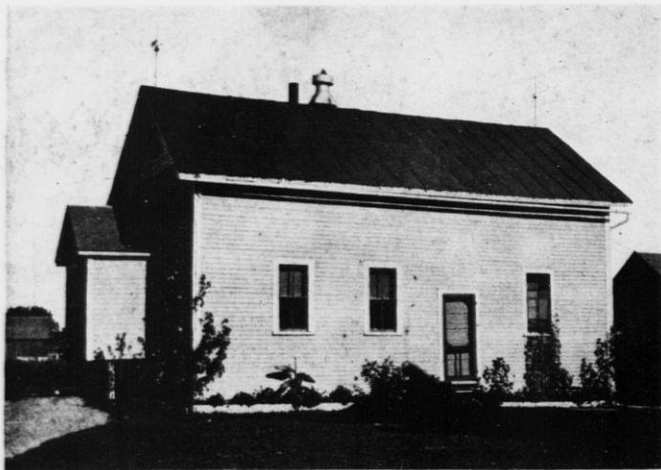
The makers of Swiss cheese were the last to generally adopt the factory plan of operation. There were two reasons, first, many had made this style of cheese for years on their farms, were doing fairly well and were satisfied; second, owing to the peculiar process of making Swiss cheese, which had not varied for centuries, viz., using copper kettles instead of vats for

heating the milk and curd, it was believed unprofitable to work up the milk of more than one hundred cows in one place. Experiments finally proved, however, that cheese, better in quality and more uniform, could be made by the factory system.

Production of cheese in Green County, once started, mounted rapidly and by 1873 claim was made for Green as the banner cheese-producing county of the State with an output of 1,186,000 pounds.

The rapid expansion of the cheese industry in Wisconsin soon created serious problems, particularly of distribution. When there were just a few factories producing only a small amount of cheese, it could be easily disposed of to the store-

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*South Grant
Cheese
Factory*

*Clark
County*

keepers in town or through peddlers but such outlets did not suffice as production rapidly mounted. The year 1871 found the market glutted and the price of cheese went down to 8 cents per pound. This situation led to the establishment the following year of the first Dairy Board in the State by a group of dairymen in Jefferson County. Merchants in Milwaukee and Chicago as well as cheesemakers throughout the State were invited to attend the first market day at Watertown. The commission-men came but, from the outset, discouraged the enterprise and few actual sales were effected on the Board.

The next year a Dairy Board of Trade was formed at Sheboygan Falls by the She-

boygan County Dairymen's Association. Two hundred twenty-six tons of the total of 573 tons of cheese made in the County that year was offered on the Board and a goodly proportion of cash sales resulted, the price received averaging around 10c a pound.

By this time Wisconsin Cheese had found its way to New York and across the seas to London and Liverpool where it had made a favorable impression. This led to attempts to deal direct with the English buyers and in the winter of 1873 C. H. Wilder, who was operating a factory at Evansville, decided to visit the British cheese markets. With him went four carloads of cheese from his factory, which he

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Allenville
Cheese
Factory*

*Winnebago
County*

proposed to market on his arrival. He succeeded in doing this to his satisfaction and returned with the report that there was an excellent opportunity for Wisconsin dairymen to market in this fashion.

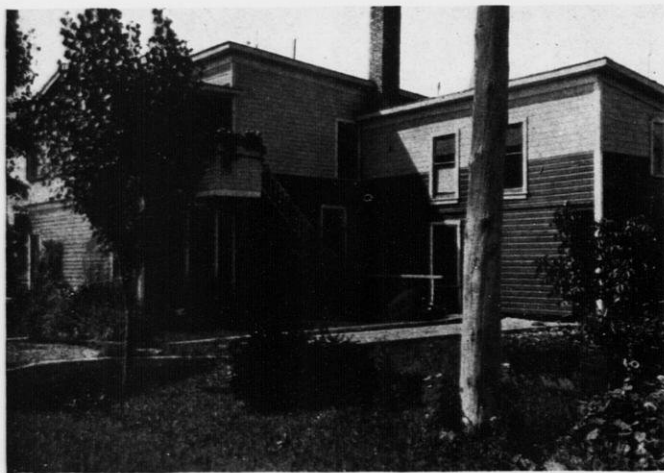
An outstanding figure in early attempts to find better markets for Wisconsin cheese was W. D. Hoard of Jefferson County, "the prophet of American dairying." Under his guidance the Wisconsin Dairy-men's Association was organized at Wauertown in 1872 and at once became the chief spokesman of the cheese industry. At the suggestion of the Association, an elaborate exhibition of dairy products was held in connection with the State Fair in 1875. Over 250 entries of cheese were re-

ceived and the highest award went to S. Littlefield of Plymouth, though the record adds that the actual cheesemaker was Mary A. Littlefield, his wife.

The great Centennial Exhibition of 1876 at Philadelphia did more than anything else up to that time to call attention to the high quality of Wisconsin cheese. With an entry of 284 packages of cheese out of a total of 2,080 on exhibition, Wisconsin received 20 awards, far more in proportion to its entries than any other state or country.

Steadily the production of Cheese in Wisconsin mounted until, in 1891, it was reported as 54,000,000 pounds. Then began to be felt the effects of an evil that had

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



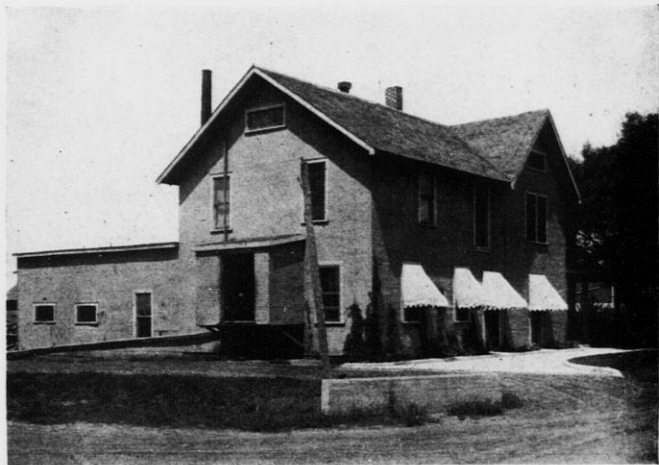
*Star
Cheese
Factory*

*Calumet
County*

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924

*Clover Belt
Cheese
Factory*

*Clark
County*



Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Farmer's Pride
Cheese
Factory*

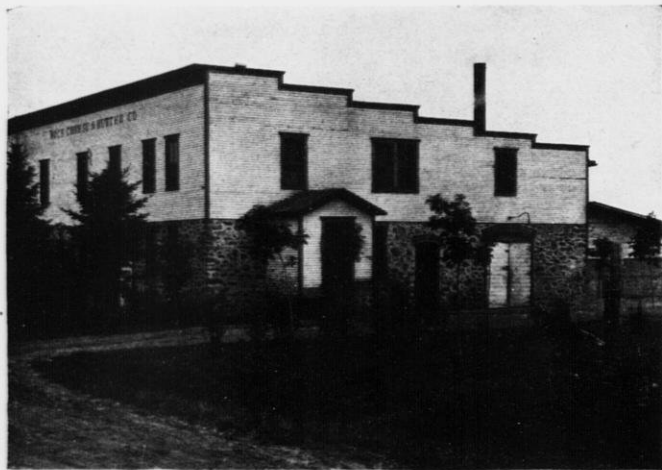
*Taylor
County*

slowly fastened itself on the industry and now threatened its very life. In their eagerness for gain, some of the factorymen had begun to skim the milk before making it into cheese, thus reducing the amount of butterfat in the finished product. This was done at first in the belief that the difference would not be noticed in foreign markets. From such a practice it was only a step further to the substitution of animal fat for the butterfat that had been taken away. Quality suffered and demand began to fall off. In two years the production of cheese dropped 9,000,000 pounds and by 1895 the yearly output had sunk to 36,000,000 pounds, less than two-thirds of what it was four years before. Drastic

measures were necessary and the legislature of 1895 was induced to pass a law prohibiting the manufacture of "filled" cheese and requiring all skimmed-milk cheese to be made in a special shape so that they might be easily identified. The industry took a new lease on life, but the great foreign trade which had been built up had been lost to Canada, never to be regained.

As the industry grew in importance, attention was directed toward its scientific and technical advancement. In 1891 the first dairy school in America was founded at the University of Wisconsin and there began a long series of brilliant researches by Babcock, Russell, Hastings,

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Rock
Cheese
Factory*

*Wood
County*

Hart, Farrington, Sammis, and many others, the results of which have vitally affected the development of cheesemaking not only in Wisconsin but throughout the world.

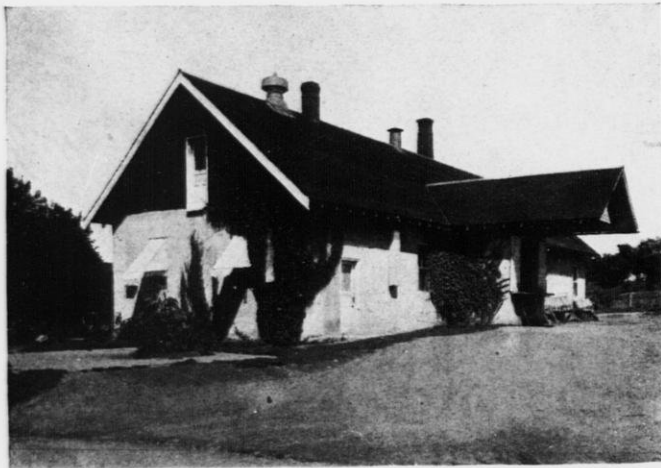
In 1893 the Wisconsin Cheesemakers' Association was formed and began a work of education and progress which it has continued uninterruptedly to the present day. The Southern Wisconsin Cheesemakers' and Dairymen's Association, intended to further the aims and purposes of the makers of Swiss, Brick, and Limburger Cheese was organized in 1901. The Central Wisconsin Cheesemakers', Buttermakers' and Dairymen's Advancement Association came into existence in 1913 and

many smaller local organizations have followed.

The marvelous growth of the Wisconsin Cheese Industry is well shown by the following figures taken from reports of the U. S. Census and the State Dairy and Food Commissioner.

Year	Production in pounds	Average Price
1849.....	400,283	..
1859.....	1,104,400	..
1869.....	3,288,581	10c
1879.....	19,535,324	9c
1889.....	54,614,861	8c
1899.....	79,384,298	10c
1909.....	148,906,910	15c
1919.....	307,375,444	30c
1923.....	332,426,653	23c

Beautiful Wisconsin Cheese Factories, 1924



*Creeklyn
Cheese
Factory*

*Calumet
County*

In the decade between 1899 and 1909, New York was passed in cheese production and Wisconsin has steadily increased her supremacy, until today practically three-fourths of all the cheese made in the United States is turned out in Wisconsin factories.

American Cheese comprises about seventy-nine per cent of the total output, the balance consisting almost entirely of the following varieties, ranked in the order of their relative importance: Brick, Swiss and Limburger.

Recent years have seen a tendency of the cheese industry in the state to move north-

westward, away from the centers of denser population in the southeastern corner, and the "cloverbelt region", centering around Marshfield and Wausau, has begun to usurp the honors of largest production long held by the lake-shore counties.

Despite the great development which has already taken place, the cheese industry of Wisconsin seems destined to continue its expansion for a long period of time. Vast areas of land still await the coming of the dairy farmer to make them productive, and it is safe to say that many years will pass before Wisconsin shall be called upon to give up its title of "The Nation's Cheesemaker."