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# HISTORY OF LAKESIDE PACKING COMPANY 1887-1987 A CENTURY OF QUALITY

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**EDITORS NOTE:** *Manitowoc County Historical Society appreciates the generous gift from Lakeside Packing Company to help fund the printing of this monograph. The courageous founding, continued successful operation marked by ingenuity, foresight and loyalty of all employees at companies like Lakeside Packing Co. are strong features in the economic health and growth of agriculture and industry in Manitowoc County.*

*Timothy R. Eggen was responsible for writing this story in observance of the company's 100th Anniversary in 1987.*

**A Century of Quality . . .** The summer production season of 1987 marks a full century of continuous operation for Lakeside Packing Company. Located on its original site at the end of Franklin Street in Manitowoc, Wisconsin, the Company has been growing on the Lakeshore for one hundred years.

The Company had its beginnings with Albert Landreth, a seed grower from Pennsylvania. He came to Manitowoc in the early 1880s to supervise the growing of seed peas for his family's business. After several years, he determined that Wisconsin soil produced a superior seed pea, one that would improve the quality of the canned product. With this idea in mind, he began experimenting with pea canning in the kitchen of a local hotel. By 1887 he was convinced that commercial seed growing and canning efforts could form the basis for a successful business. That summer he produced the first commercial pea pack in Wisconsin in a new brick and spruce building located on the shore of Lake Michigan. His first pack was small, as everything was done by hand, without the assistance of electrical power. Cans and lids were hammered into shape, assembled and soldered together. Cans were filled through a small hole in the top of the can, and a tin cap was soldered over the hole prior to the product being cooked. When the process was complete, Landreth would place his product in wooden crates for sale in local markets. His product bore the "Lakeside" name; a name that

would become a national brand and form the reputation of an entire Company.

Landreth and business associates F. Harris, C.A. Knudson, Theodore G. Shore, Adolph J. Endress and Edwin G. Nash did not formally execute the Company's articles of incorporation until September 20, 1888, after their second production season. On that date, they named their venture the Albert Landreth Seed Company and issued capital stock in the amount of ten thousand dollars. Their business purpose was to be "the growing, buying, selling and dealing in all kinds of farm and garden products and farm and garden seeds . . ." No mention of canning was made in their original articles of incorporation, such was the uncertainty of the future associated with this method of preserving food products.

The canning end of Landreth's business would continue to expand in the late 1880s and early 1890s. Production volume increased, and product quality continued to improve. Steady progress in production methods and an association with the University of Wisconsin's College of Agriculture provided the basis for this continued

growth. In these early days when the market for commercially canned food products was still developing, improved production volume and reliable quality were critical to a company's success. Landreth mastered both problems well, and improved demand caused a second plant to be built in Sheboygan in 1890. Landreth's brother Harold was named as its superintendent.

On April 24, 1896, a meeting of the Company's Board of Directors was held at Landreth's residence at 610 N. 9th Street in Manitowoc. A motion was made and unanimously adopted to change the name of the corporation to The Albert Landreth Company. The Company was to stake its future as a canning company and diminish its role as a seed producer. This shift in business emphasis would produce thousands of jobs and millions of cases of food products. It would also establish the Company's unique business niche in the communities in which it would operate over the next century.

In 1899, twelve years after the successful beginning of his Company, Landreth died while vacationing in California. He was 41 years old. James Brooks, one of Landreth's employees since 1891, was named as superintendent of the Manitowoc plant. Dr. Alexander Frazier, 624 N. 8th St., Manitowoc, Landreth's personal physician, was named as President of the Company. Mr. Andrew Johnson was named to head the sales department and was also named Corporate Secretary.

In 1902 the Company expanded once again. It acquired the East Wisconsin Canning Company located on the corner of Franklin and 16th Street in Manitowoc. Built in 1900 by local businessman John Schuette, the plant was said to be spacious and modern in every way. Shortly after its purchase, Dr. Frazier sold the plant and property to chair manufacturer F.A. Dennett of Port Washington, Wisconsin. On January 15, 1906, Dennett's chair factory, still bearing Landreth's name and the Company's Lakeside brand name, burned to the ground, killing one



*Albert Landreth, Founder, a Seed Grower from Pennsylvania.*





Manitowoc Plant, begun 1883, completed 1890.

fireman.

In 1906, Superintendent James Brooks left Manitowoc, and Charles Tadych was named as his successor. Harold Landreth was replaced by Charles Flint at the Sheboygan plant, and he by Peter Sedler. The following year, the Albert Landreth Company was sold to the Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company. At the time of the purchase, the assets of the Landreth Company and those of E.J. Vaudreuil Canning Company of Two Rivers were combined to form a new company. The Company's officers were Charles Gillett, President; E.J. Vaudreuil, Vice President; Benjamin Webb, Treasurer; and J.W. Blackledge, Secretary. This group hired Louis Wedertz, who had been in the wholesale grocery business in Burlington, Iowa, to learn the affairs of their operation, anticipating the retirement of Dr. Frazier. Wedertz started as the Company's bookkeeper and soon became Manager of the entire operation. In 1908 he hired his son Harry L. Wedertz in a production capacity. With the combination of the two canning operations, the Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company owned plants in Manitowoc, Two Rivers, Sheboygan, Amery, and Turtle Lake, Wisconsin.

In 1909 several changes took place within the structure of the Company. Dr. Frazier resigned as did E.J. Vaudreuil. Charles Gillett continued in his role as President of the Company, but more and more responsibility accrued to L.E. Wedertz in managing the day-to-day affairs of the business. Several changes also took place in the operations end of the business in that year. From the time of the start of Landreth's operation, crops had been grown on land rented by the Company. The land was prepared, planted, cultivated, and harvested by Company employees. In 1909 a decision was made to contract with farmers for growing crops. Using this method, the Company felt it could be assured of

higher quality raw products. Farmers who grew crops for the Company were paid extra for producing higher quality, more salable products. This provided them with an incentive for doing the small but essential tasks associated with producing a better product. The year 1909 was also a drought year. The Company's planting of peas was hit by heavy losses. As a result, the Company was one of several in Wisconsin to experiment with a second planting of peas. The experiment worked, and the notion of second plantings and staggered plantings gained new credibility.

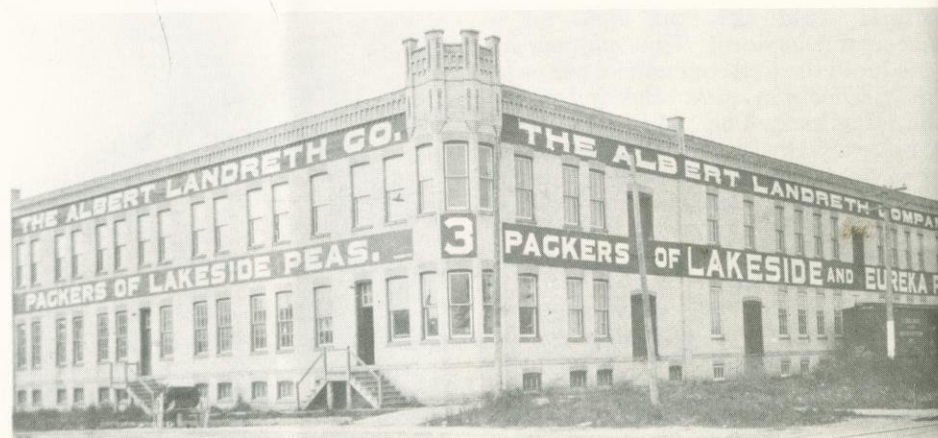
By 1913 the Company added a plant in Reedsville and had installed Fred Dusold as Superintendent. Harry L. Wedertz was named as local manager for this facility which was to be sold the following year. Robert Sweeting replaced Charles Tadych as Superintendent at Manitowoc, William Christianson was named Superintendent at Amery, and Albert Schneider was named Superintendent at Sheboygan. The Company's Turtle Lake plant north of Eau Claire was run by Bart Fennimore.

In 1914 the Company closed the Reedsville plant and named Harry L. Wedertz as Superintendent at

Manitowoc. That year the Company canned tomatoes, cabbage, and pumpkin for the first time, a departure from their staple product line of peas and green beans.

The years preceding the onset of World War I saw a tremendous growth in the number of canning plants in Wisconsin and the numbers of people who were employed by them. At one point, there was a canning plant in most small towns on the rail line between Milwaukee and Green Bay. The Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company hired as many as eleven hundred people at its Two Rivers' location during the summer of 1915 to process its products. Men, women, and children were employed chiefly in the initial stages of processing the product. In these years, mechanical harvesting equipment was nonexistent. When crops were ready, they were harvested by hand, separated from the vine or stalk by hand, snipped or cleaned by hand, and placed in baskets, burlap bags, or other containers. From there the product was brought to the plant for washing, inspection, and canning. This process was repeated time and again, summer after summer. Harvest time meant the same thing to Paul Kraska, the Superintendent at Amery in 1916 as it did to Bert Chambers at Turtle Lake, and Harry Wedertz in Manitowoc. The Company required great numbers of people for short periods of time to produce as many cases of products as they could. In addition, the product had to be of high quality or it would not compete with the other emerging brands or with vegetable products now being canned in homes across the country.

After World War I, Louis Wedertz continued to oversee the entire operation of the Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company. He had helped develop the Company and its five plants into an efficient operation. He had also managed to maintain and improve the Company's reputation for producing quality products. By 1921 he was ready to make a move that would set a course for the future. On



East Wisconsin Canning Company, purchased in 1902.



September 2, 1921, Wedertz called a meeting of what was to become a new Board of Directors for a new company. At the meeting which he chaired, he transferred his interest in three pickling plants in Illinois to a new company which was to be known as The Lakeside Canning and Pickling Company. Shareholders in the new company were as follows:

L.E. Wedertz — 501 shares  
S.K. Ferguson — 1 share  
H.L. Wedertz — 1 share  
Elizabeth Wedertz — 1 share  
A.L. Hougen — 1 share



Louis E. Wedertz

In addition, he transferred the ownership of Plant #2 of the Watertown Canning Company at Plainview, Minnesota to the new company along with \$13,236.85 in full payment for his share of Company stock. An election was held, and he was named President of the new venture. A.L. Hougen was named Vice President, S.K. Ferguson was named Secretary/Treasurer, and H.L. Wedertz was named Assistant Treasurer. Near the end of the meeting, the name of the Company was changed to Lakeside Packing Company.

On August 26, 1922, the new Company made an offer to purchase the assets of the Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company for \$50,000. On October 18, 1922, the offer was accepted. The assets of Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company were transferred to Lakeside Packing Company.

The years that followed the formation of the new Company were marked by change and growth. The



Picking beans near Shoto, early 1900s.

Plainview, Minnesota plant was targeted for a complete rebuilding and remodeling. Located adjacent to a rail line and surrounded by fertile cropland, the Plainview plant's wooden structure was inadequate for the demands to be placed upon it. The Directors of the Company approved the expenditure of \$15,000 to rebuild the entire plant prior to the 1923 production season.

Other changes included the addition of pickles and olives to the Company's product line. Olives were imported directly from Spain, and the Company's pickling operation was moved from Illinois to Manitowoc. The Company now owned and operated plants in Plainview, Minnesota; Manitowoc, Two Rivers, Amery, Turtle Lake, and Sheboygan, Wisconsin.

Lakeside Packing Company's 1923 price list contained one full page of prices and sizes for its principal item, peas. The choicest Fancy grade peas were sold as "Lakeside Grade Peas" and sold under the Lakeside label. The Red Rabbit and Blue Diamond label were also applied to Fancy Grade Peas. A case of twelve #10 (one gallon) cans of Lakeside Grade Tiny Extra Sifted Early June Peas sold for \$13.25 in 1923.

The Extra Standard Grade was a notch below the Fancy Grade. Peas in this grade were sold under the Eureka, Hobby, or Northern Wisconsin label. A twelve can case of #10 Extra Sifted Sweet Gems of this grade sold for \$9.25.

The Standard Grade represented the

lower end of the Lakeside line in 1923. A case of #10 Standard Alaskas sold for \$8.75 and were labeled as Sea Gem, Continental, Waverly, or King Bird brand.

The Company also produced green and wax beans, sauerkraut, corn, pork and beans, and red kidney beans in 1923. Peas were produced at all six plant locations; green and wax beans were produced at Manitowoc, Two Rivers, and Sheboygan. Plainview was the Company's only corn-producing plant, and the remaining specialty items were all produced in Manitowoc. Pickles and related products were handled by a separate department within the Company.

In 1928 the Company hired Earl Miller, a man who would become a part of the increasing mechanization of the Company. In the year he was hired, the Company was still using many of the same methods to produce its products that had been developed and improved by Albert Landreth and Dr. Frazier. The plant had only two electric motors in 1928. One ran the elevator in the warehouse; the other ran a can elevator, lifting cans from the rail cars on the siding next to the plant to can lines on the second floor. The only other source of power at the time was a stationary steam engine located next to the boiler room. This was used to power the few flat belt conveyors the Company used to transport its products from one area to another. Power drills, saws, cutters, and other electrically powered tools had only begun to be developed.

The 1930s marked the beginning of consolidation efforts for some of the Company's smaller, older plants and expansion for others. Plainview Plant superintendent Albert Wild would oversee a building program that would replace wooden structures with concrete and tile in 1930. At President Louis Wedertz's direction, the Two Rivers plant was closed and dismantled that same year; Turtle Lake was closed in 1931. These two plants were old and timeworn. Products they canned each summer



Embossed label,  
20 oz. can of peas, 1923.





*Canning plant built by Landreth, shown in the 1920s.*

would be canned instead at newer, expanded facilities at Manitowoc, Plainview, and Sheboygan. The plant at Amery was to survive. It was newer and larger than the other two and gave the Company a more widely dispersed growing area. This was an especially important safeguard at a time when poor weather and growing conditions could destroy a smaller company's entire crop if it was concentrated in one growing area.

By 1935 the Company had long since discontinued the practice of making its own cans. It had been purchasing cans as early as 1916, buying a quantity that year from a company known as Norton Brothers. This company would later become part of the American Can Company, a growing organization from northern Illinois. In 1935 Lakeside Packing Company signed an exclusive purchase contract with Columbus Food Corporation for the cans it needed the following year. Exclusive agreements with can suppliers were common and expected in the 1930s and 1940s.

1936 saw the end of one era in Lakeside Packing Company's history and the beginning of a new one. On April 6, 1936, Louis E. Wedertz died while vacationing after attending a convention. He had formed a modern Company from a widely dispersed collection of canneries and built a solid reputation for quality along the way. An account published after his death states: "The Lakeside label, known through the Middle West as quality mark on canned vegetables, is regarded by many as the most valuable of the unadvertised labels used by Wisconsin canners. The prestige it acquired is due largely to Mr. Wedertz's packing skill and his insistence on quality." He had laid a solid financial and operational foundation upon which the growing Company would build.

On August 27, 1936, a special meeting of the Company's Board of Directors was convened. At the meeting, they elected Harry L. Wedertz as President of Lakeside Packing

Company. He had been Manager of the Manitowoc operation since 1914 and had been involved in Company affairs since his hire in 1908. At the same meeting, S.K. Ferguson was named Secretary/Treasurer and Mrs. L.E. Wedertz Assistant Secretary. Mr. A.L. Hougen was named to the position of Vice President in 1937. Following Wedertz's election as President, Franklin Smalley was named Superintendent at Manitowoc. Smalley was succeeded in 1938 by Earl Miller.

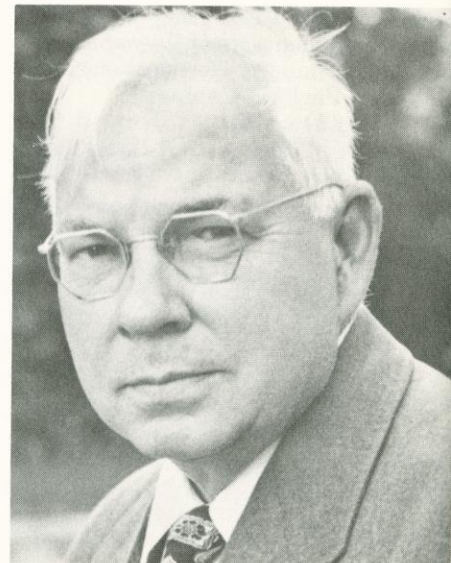
In 1939 the Company's Lakeside labels underwent a change. Labels were produced in brighter colors with more attractive pictures of the Company's products. The Plainview plant underwent another change. Buildings were redone and additional warehouse space was built for a sum of \$20,000. By the February 15, 1941 meeting of the Board of Directors, the Company had named S.K. Ferguson as Vice President and Treasurer, Ed Zeman as Secretary, and B.A. Simkins as Assistant Secretary. H.L. Wedertz remained in his position as President. That same year, the Company hired Northwestern University graduate Gordon A. Lund for responsibilities in Finance and Sales and named Sylvester S. Ferguson as Superintendent of the Sheboygan plant. The 1941 pack season came and went like each of the fifty-five pack seasons that preceded it.

The events of December 7, 1941, changed all of that. Like nearly every other enterprise in cities and towns across the country, Lakeside Packing Company prepared to contribute to the war effort. At the February 9, 1942 meeting of the Board of Directors, President Wedertz announced that "due to the war, and the demands the war was going to make upon canning industries, all persons connected with the management of the Company would be required to devote more of their time and perform extra ordinary services for the Company in order to aid the war effort." Managers and other employees at Lakeside Packing

Company were among the millions who responded to the crisis that faced the country. President Harry L. Wedertz was one of many corporate heads of state who encouraged his people to do their best for their country in 1941. What is noteworthy is the way the Company and its people responded to the challenge.

One of the first new challenges of the War effort was government imposed restrictions on the use of any materials that could be diverted to the armed services. In 1942 Lakeside Packing Company received word that it could only pack some of its products in cans, as steel and tin was to be used in armament for all branches of the service. Some of the Company's products had to be packed in glass jars, a relatively new process in an age of high volume mass production. Though families had been canning products in glass for years in homes across the country, their introduction at Lakeside was not without its problems. In the summer of 1942, personnel from Owens Illinois Glass Company and The White Cap Company spent three to four weeks at Lakeside. Their engineers and lab personnel developed the methods necessary to assure a sterile product with the proper headspace between the product and the lid. This was accomplished by manually pushing the product down in the jar, filling it with brine and then blowing steam into the jar just before the cap went on. The jar was then sprayed with cold water, condensing the steam and creating a vapor vacuum. As expected, this method was not without its problems, chief among them was breakage.

At a September 27, 1943 special meeting of the stockholders, President Wedertz announced that the meeting had been called for the purpose of considering the building of new heated warehouses in Manitowoc and Plainview. He stated that "this was



*Harry L. Wedertz.*



necessary because the company in 1942 and 1943 had to set aside a large percentage of its pack for the Quartermaster Corps of the United States Army." At the meeting, he secured the approval of the shareholders to "apply to the War Department for certificates of approval so that construction may be started as soon as possible." The cities of Manitowoc and Plainview were petitioned for construction permits and the projects were undertaken. This was yet another step the Company would take to aid the war effort.

In 1942 and 1943, up to 60% of Lakeside's production was delivered to the Quartermaster Corps in wire-wrapped cardboard boxes for shipment overseas.

By February 1944 the Company had gone through two wartime pack seasons and was experiencing an acute labor shortage, especially during the busy summer months. Other area businesses in all plant locations were drawing on an already short supply of workers for their own contribution to the war effort. Because of this situation, President Wedertz called on the following key people to forego their two weeks of vacation in 1944 and again in 1945:

B.A. Simkins	Wm. Lukes
G.A. Lund	Wm. Cavanaugh
S.S. Ferguson	Paul Kraska
Earl Miller	O. Gabriel
C.P. Carbon	Albert Wild

Labor shortages were met, and materials shortages were met; despite these problems, the Company managed to set new records for production. This resulted in a wartime profit for the Company, monies that would be returned to the United States Treasury under provisions of the National Defense Appropriation Act.

Times of national emergencies and stress can produce new technologies as individuals attempt to cope with demands placed upon them. This was true for Lakeside in the pack season of 1944. Until 1944, beets and carrots were pulled from the ground by hand, put on piles and then forked into machines which crudely removed the leaves and tops. This was a tedious, labor intensive process that hadn't changed since the beginning of the canning industry. Using this method, Lakeside could produce 400 to 500 equivalent cases per day of #2 cans. The #2 can was the standard at that time; it held 20 oz. of product.

In 1944, a harvester was purchased from the Scott Viner Company for use on carrots and beets. The labor saving machine dug the crop out of the ground, cut off the top and conveyed the product to a truck. The machinery was self-propelled, and it was a major improvement over the manual harvesting method. The new digger had its problems, however. It was

heavy and didn't turn well. On moist ground, it slid from side to side, topping some beets and missing others. Those that remained had to be picked by hand and their tops twisted off by hand. A revised digger was purchased a year later. It was lighter and worked more effectively on wet ground. Production increased by as much as 30%. This machine was the forerunner of machinery that is still in use today.

All of the Company's war efforts were rewarded on August 14, 1944 when they received the War Food Administration's "A" Award.

Mr. B.E. Fillis of the WFA regional office in Chicago was the principal speaker at the award presentation. The outdoor ceremony took place in front of the Company's office and plant at the foot of Franklin Street. The award of a special penant was made by Major C.F. Hilker of the Chicago Quartermaster Depot. It was accepted on behalf of the Company by President Harry Wedertz.

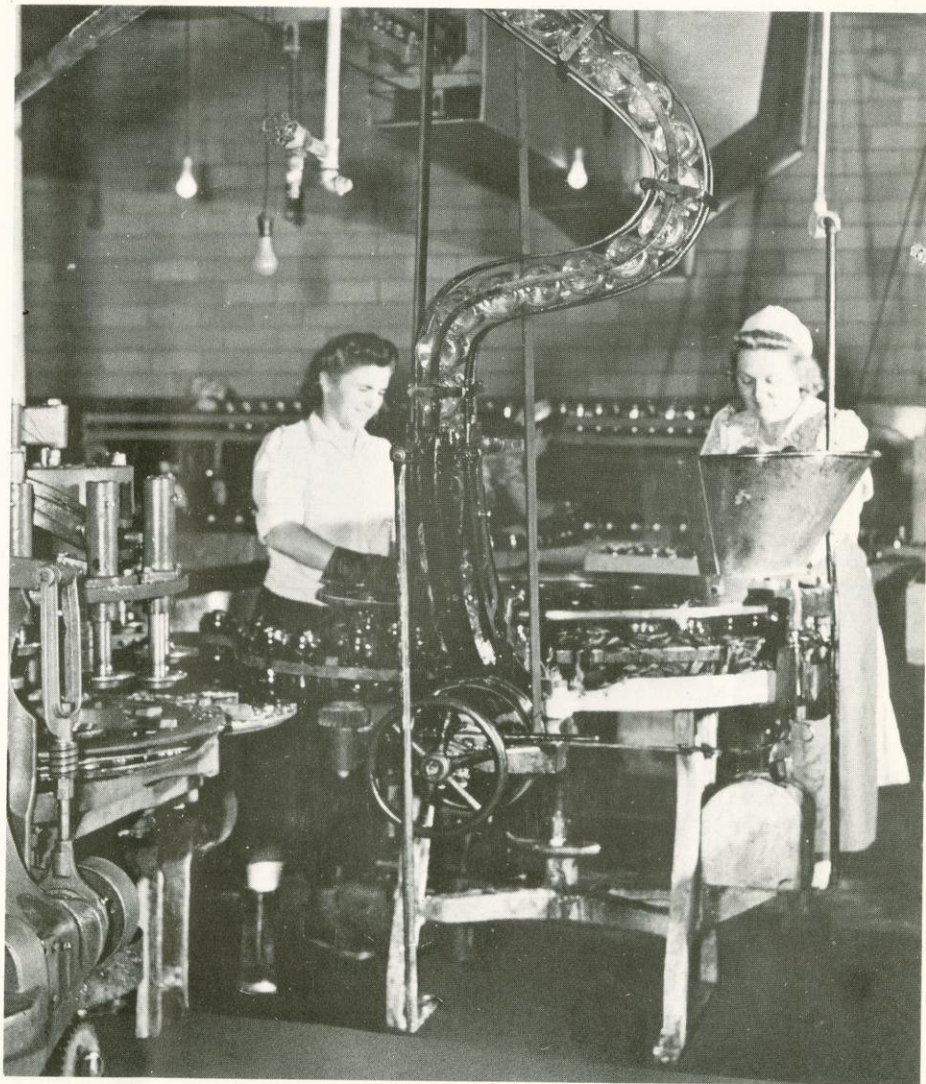
County Judge Jerome Ledvina who presided at the ceremony presented Mr. Fillis. Mr. Fillis said: "we are utilizing all our fighting strength and industrial might as well as our food producing resources and marshalling them into

one unified and effective fighting force."

Fillis read the names of four company employees who had enviable service records. These four employees accepted "A" award pins for the other workers at the plant. Lt. Edward Ackerman, stationed with the Navy in Manitowoc, presented the "A" awards personally to Charles Schultz who had 44 years of service with the Company, John Schultz, 42 years, Herman Kollath, 34 years and Theresa Radl, 20 years of service."

Major Hilker, in presenting the award to the Company, said there is nothing as vital in the persecution of the war as food. "Your activity behind the lines does not offer the personal satisfaction derived from meeting and vanquishing the enemy . . . but it is every bit as important."

President H.L. Wedertz of Lakeside Packing Company in accepting the "A" award said that "this Company was the oldest canning company in Wisconsin. It has pioneered this industry . . . this characteristic pioneering spirit is exemplified by the farmer who has broken all records in the production of the vital food



Canning in glass jars, Margaret Meissner (left) and Francis Zborlski, about 1938.



products needed by the armed forces," Mr. Wedertz concluded.

The Manitowoc Marine Band, under the direction of Emil Sohrweide, furnished the music for the occasion. True to the spirit of the award presentation, employees began working by moving in bags of beans to the escalator as soon as the crowd dispersed.

The post-war years were characterized by continued change, both for the Company and the people who helped shape its modern future. In 1946 Gordon A. Lund was named Assistant Treasurer, assuming more financial responsibilities for the Company.

In April of 1948, Lakeside Packing Company received the Brand Name Foundation's "Certificate of Public Service" in Milwaukee. Presented to President Harry L. Wedertz, the award recognized Lakeside for "50 consecutive years of service to the American consumer." This award was yet another milestone in Company history. Few companies, especially within the vegetable canning industry, could lay claim to having served the American consumer for fifty years by 1948. The Brand Name Foundation Seal was applied to the Lakeside label.

In 1949 the Company named Gordon Lund Corporate Treasurer and hired Daniel C. Blitz and Two Rivers' native Roy J. Ney; William T. Cavanaugh was named Superintendent of the Company's Plainview plant. The Minnesota pea and corn plant was

large and getting larger by the time Cavanaugh relocated from Sheboygan and replaced Albert Wild as Superintendent. He brought Manitowoc native John Brady to Plainview with him as his Field Superintendent. That year the Plainview plant would produce 344,650 cases of vegetables out of 1,156,483 cases produced by the Company.

At about the same time, Cavanaugh named Rolland "Andy" Anderson to a position in the Plainview plant office. The late 1940s saw more innovations in field operations for Lakeside Packing Company. Until 1949 farmers cut peas with their own mowers. Mowers were drawn by tractors that cut the pea vines and laid them in a windrow with a buncher. The vines were then loaded into trucks using hay loaders for transport to the area viner station. Around 1949 the Company purchased some fairly sophisticated cutting equipment from the Hume Company and another model from the Scott Viner Company. The latter proved too clumsy and inefficient, though it did have the advantage of being portable. Lakeside was one of the first companies in the area to use this equipment.

The Company also experimented with its first automated corn harvester in the late 1940s. By all accounts, it suffered from severe design problems and couldn't match the production of the hand labor it was designed to replace.

By 1951 John Brady was named Superintendent at Sheboygan, and he moved back to Wisconsin to assume his responsibilities. Rolland Anderson was transferred from the Plainview plant office to the Field Department the same year. Anderson and Brady would see many changes in field operations during their careers, changes of a larger scale than their predecessors. By 1953 the Company had experimented successfully with mechanical corn harvesters and would soon use them to completely replace hand labor. This was a major move forward, for it meant that Lakeside could drastically cut its costs and harvest thousands of acres of corn more efficiently than ever before. The early 1950s also saw another major development in field operations; one that is taken for granted as standard practice today. Commercial fertilizers had been in use since the 1930s but little was known about effective techniques for applying them. The 1950s saw the development of anhydrous ammonia, which was injected into the soil in its liquid form. Lakeside's growers were skeptical at first about the new technology, preferring to rely on the proven method of dry application of ammonium nitrate. In 1954 growers were offered contracts on the condition that they use the new technology to improve the nitrogen content of their soil. Yields increased 50-60% that year. Farmers who were used to getting three to four



President Harry L. Wedertz accepting "A" award in 1944.



tons of sweet corn per acre now got five to six out of the same acre of land. This meant greater financial returns to the growers and improved case recovery for Lakeside. Product quality improved as well with the development of effective weed control techniques during the same period.

In September of 1951, Robert W. Ferguson, son of S.K. Ferguson, was hired in the Sales Department in Manitowoc. He had graduated from Northwestern University, served in the Navy, and worked for a time at Sunbeam Corporation prior to joining his father and brother at Lakeside. In December of that year, Plainview plant Superintendent William T. Cavanaugh hired Stan Wachowiak as his Office Manager at the Plainview plant. The Winona, Minnesota native was a World War II Marine Corps veteran and was graduated in Accounting from St. Mary's College in Winona. In 1953 Joel M. Sitkiewitz was hired in a production capacity at the Manitowoc plant. All of these men, Lund, Cavanaugh, Brady, Anderson, Miller, Sitkiewitz, Blitz, Ney, Ferguson and Wachowiak would play a role in shaping the fortunes of the Company from the 1950s to the 1980s.

The mid 1950s and early 1960s saw more changing times for the Company. Prices for the Company's products were steady, but efficiencies, always important in the industry, became paramount. With this emphasis, the Company invested in their first self-propelled bean pickers. Built by Chisholm Ryder Company, the machines did not entirely replace hand labor though the cost savings were significant. Picking two rows at a time, the machinery eliminated burlap bags that had been used to gather product since the turn of the century. Beans were picked, conveyed to a truck, taken to the plant, and conveyed off the truck. This system allowed for greater amounts of product to be picked and canned more rapidly than ever before. Also, in the mid 1950s, the standard 20 oz., #2 can was gradually being replaced at the request of customers. The 16 oz. #303 can size would become the standard of the industry for the years to come. These innovations were balanced by other realities, however.

At the direction of President Wedertz and now Executive Vice President Gordon A. Lund, the Company's Pittsville plant was closed in 1958, four years after it had been acquired. By 1960 the decision was reached to close Lakeside's Amery plant. This plant had been part of the Company since the acquisition of the Albert Landreth Company by the Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company in 1907. When plant Superintendent Elmer Rude retired, several of his key employees, Charles Holst, Norman Woodkey, and Eugene Ferk, relocated to the



*Feeding pea viner often went on into the night.*

Plainview or Manitowoc plants. Also, in the late 1950s, the Company began to place less and less emphasis on its own labels in marketing its products. Up until that time, the Company had sold its products under the labels it owned such as Lakeside, Hobby and Eureka. With the rising cost of producing its own embossed labels and the increased emphasis on the customer's "private" label, Lakeside began marketing its products under the customer's label. The Lakeside label disappeared from store shelves across the country and the Company's products became indistinguishable from their competitor's products. The reputation for quality that the Company had earned was still intact, though it was now less visible to the customer.

In 1961 H.L. Wedertz became Chairman of the Board and Gordon A. Lund was named President. At the same meeting, D.C. Blitz was named as Vice President, R.W. Ferguson was named Vice President of Sales, Ed Zeman was named Assistant Secretary and Stan Wachowiak, Treasurer. Total case production for Lakeside Packing Company that year reached 2,297,397 cases.

The Company that Lund managed as President was nearly 75 years old in 1961. Its annual sales were \$5,634,806 that year. For the next 11 years, Lund would preside over a Company that would see periods of growth, profit and innovation, tempered by years of poor crop yields and depressed prices. The cyclical nature of the canning business was nothing new. The interaction of market conditions, production cost and crop yields had determined the economy of the canning business since Landreth's time. However, in the 1960s when sizeable investments in plants

and equipment could be followed by years of low profitability, some of the smaller canning companies began to disappear. They could not afford to keep pace technologically, and they could not afford not to.

Lakeside took advantage of several technologies during Lund's tenure as President. Mechanization of field operations was expanded to peas in the mid 1960s. From 1964 to 1967, Lakeside's stationary viner stations were replaced by 28 mobile pea combines. This greatly improved efficiency and productivity in an area of operations that had remained stable for the preceding 75 years.

In addition, the 1960s saw the use of effective herbicides for use on peas. Prior to 1960, weeds reduced yield potential by 10-40%; this would in turn have an effect on stocks available for sale. Herbicides greatly improved yield and had the added effect on enhancing quality.

In 1963 President Lund introduced a plan for sharing profits with the growing number of full time employees of the Company. Known as the Profit Sharing Retirement Trust, this Plan was a progressive step for a Company of Lakeside's size in the 1960s.

1964 was a drought year. Yields in the Company's major crops of peas and corn were reduced by 40 to 45%. This in turn, had a serious negative effect on profits for a Company used to producing 3,000,000 plus cases of product.

In 1965 Office Manager Roy J. Ney was named Corporate Secretary; Mrs. E.M. Lund was named Assistant Treasurer/Secretary.

In 1966, the Sheboygan plant was closed and Superintendent John Brady was transferred to Manitowoc. Daniel C. Cavanaugh was hired in Plainview



after serving in the Air Force and receiving a degree in Mathematics from Winona State University. That same year Harry L. Wedertz retired as Chairman at age 75. A Lakeside employee since 1908 and President since 1936, Wedertz helped to mold and shape the Company as it passed from the horse and wagon age to the age of high speed mechanization.

In 1967 Lakeside purchased a Hydrostatic cooker from the Chisholm Ryder Company. Built in England, it was shipped to Manitowoc by freighter and unloaded by crane at the river dock on Sixth Street. The sixty foot high cooker would be erected on specially constructed pilings capable of withstanding the weight of the machinery, cans and water used for cooking and cooling the product. The new machine was yet another example of the Company's increasing investment in equipment which would allow it to improve productivity and quality.

By 1969 Gordon A. Lund was named Chairman, President and Chief Executive Officer. The following year Stan Wachowiak would be named Vice President of Operations. Lakeside owned and operated two highly efficient plants by 1970, and sales

reached the \$11 million mark the following year.

In 1971 a venture called Shoreline Foods was begun. Lakeside Packing subscribed two thirds of the stock issued for this business which was to be engaged in the manufacture of fish meal and the canning of sardines. Though it was to be dissolved four years later, the business held some initial promise as a natural spinoff of the Company's expertise in canning and preserving.

Also, in 1971 Lakeside Packing Company hired J. Douglas Quick, a Northwestern University graduate with a degree in Chemical Engineering. Prior to joining Lakeside, Quick had worked in product development for the Quaker Oats Company. He was soon to become involved in the Operations area at Lakeside, an area that would continue to develop under his direction.

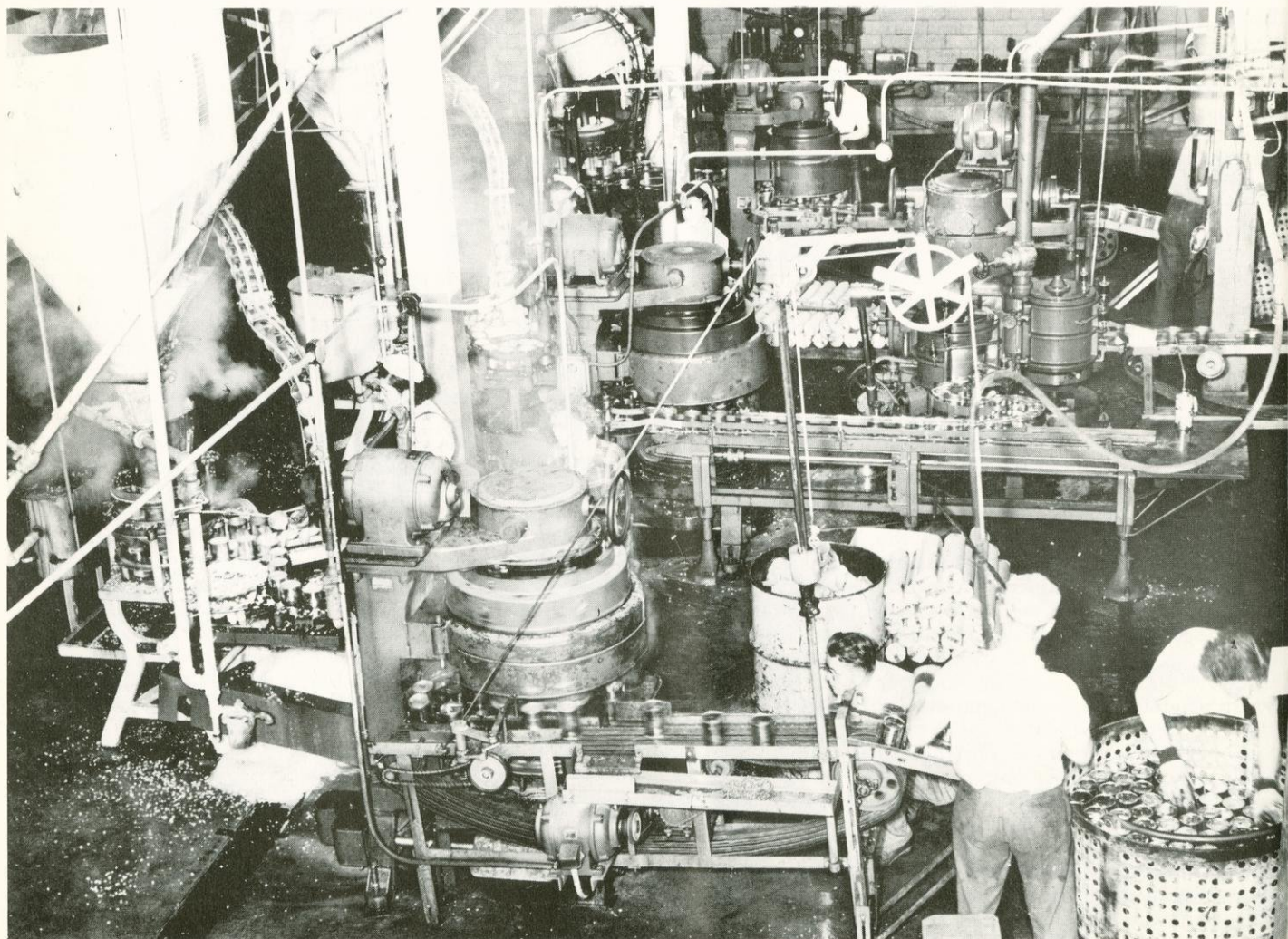
With the death of Gordon A. Lund in 1972, Robert W. Ferguson was named President of the 85 year old enterprise. The Ferguson name had been a part of Lakeside's history since 1921; Robert W. Ferguson would serve as the Company's seventh President. Mrs. E.M. Lund was named Chairman and Stan Wachowiak Executive Vice

President and Treasurer.

In 1973 the Company made an investment of two million dollars in Plainview for an expanded warehouse and a new corn processing room. Improvements to the corn room allowed the Company to husk and cut over 50 tons of sweet corn per hour. About the same time, the Company installed a high speed canning line in Manitowoc. Working with Continental Can Company, Lakeside Operations personnel adapted Belgian-made machinery to vegetable production and achieved line speeds of 250 to 600 cans per minute. These speeds were unheard of in the vegetable processing industry. Once again, this allowed Lakeside to gain a competitive edge by producing more of its quality products in less time at a lower cost.

1974 was a year for physical losses at the Plainview plant. A June tornado caused \$500,000 damage to buildings and contents; fires in August and September caused \$150,000 in damage.

The mid 1970s marked the retirement of two key employees. Earl Miller, Plant Superintendent in Manitowoc since 1938, retired and was replaced by twenty-four year veteran Joel M. Sitkiewitz. Sitkiewitz worked in all phases of plant operation since



Canning area, Manitowoc.





*Gordon A. Lund*

the time of his hire in 1953. In Plainview William T. Cavanaugh retired after a thirty-five year career, serving as Plant Superintendent since 1949. His son, Daniel C. Cavanaugh was named to fill the Superintendent's position. Both Cavanaugh and Sitkiewitz would manage the operations of two plants that were producing over 3.9 million cases of vegetable products. This period also marked the beginning of Lakeside's entrance into the canned meat business. Subcontracting for another producer, Lakeside began its work canning beef in 1975 for the United States Department of Agriculture.

In 1982 Robert W. Ferguson was elected Chairman of the Board. Stan Wachowiak was named the eighth President of the ninety-five year old Company. J. Douglas Quick was promoted to the position of Executive Vice President, having served as Director of Operations and Vice President of Operations. Ferguson, Wachowiak and Quick were to play leadership roles in a major expansion effort which began in 1982. Never before had the Company committed itself to the investment in plants and equipment that these men initiated in that year. At a special January meeting of the Board of Directors, it was agreed to enter into the purchase of two freezers, one to be installed at Manitowoc, and the other at Plainview. The freezers would help Lakeside diversify its markets, give the Company greater flexibility, and lessen its dependence on the canned vegetable market. At the time of the purchase, Lakeside Packing Company was the first independently owned Company in the Midwest to enter the frozen vegetable market. Manitowoc's Calumet warehouse was also expanded in 1982. The warehouse was increased by 50,000 square feet that year to eliminate the Company's use of outside storage facilities for its canned goods.

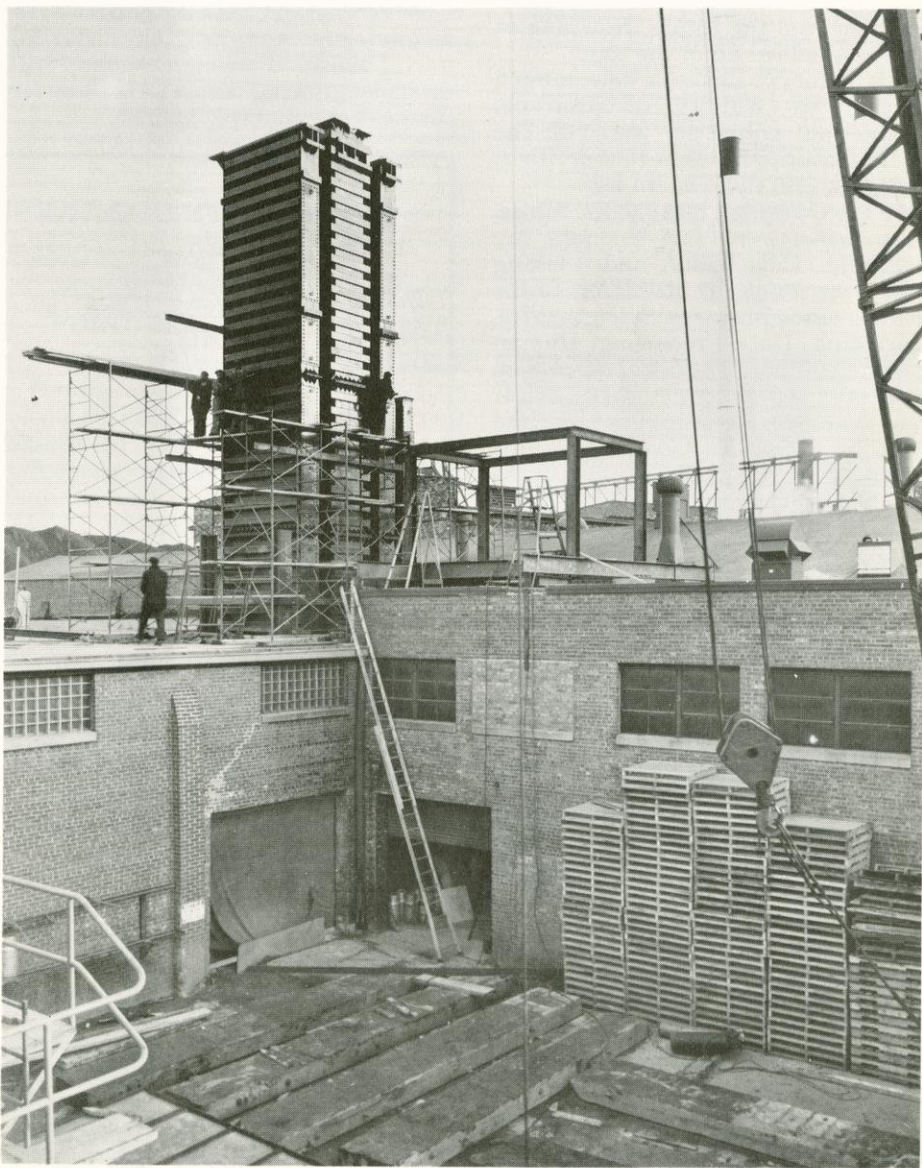
In 1983, new frozen packaging equipment and computerized corn cutting equipment were installed at Plainview. The \$2 million project centralized frozen packaging operations at Plainview and improved corn cutting efficiency to 65 tons per hour.

The years leading up to the June 1986 retirement of Chairman Robert W. Ferguson and President Stan Wachowiak were a continuation of expansion efforts begun in 1982. The Company added a broccoli and cauliflower production line, a beet steamer, expanded its dry goods warehousing at Plainview, added frozen storage space of 476,000 cubic feet, purchased seven new pea pod strippers, revamped the pea processing plant, added product chillers and purchased four new bean harvesters. In addition, Lakeside enhanced its contract packing operations to include five new products for the George A. Hormel Company of Austin, Minnesota. One of these products, Hormel's Top Shelf brand entree, is a

truly revolutionary concept in food production technology. Years in development, this product has just begun its introduction to the marketplace.

Lakeside's ninth President, J. Douglas Quick, manages a Company that is 100 years strong. Sales top the \$60 million mark and the Company has been listed as a member of the "Wisconsin 100." This listing recognizes Wisconsin's largest privately held companies. In 1987, the officers of the Company are John Leibham, Vice President and Director-Sales Service; Russell J. Schmidt, Treasurer; G. Jeffrey Lund, Secretary; and Daniel C. Blitz, Assistant Secretary. James Schwarzhoff was named General Manager of Lakeside's Plainview facility upon the promotion of Daniel Cavanaugh to the position of Director of Operations. Richard Bartz was named General Manager of the one hundred year old Manitowoc facility in May, 1987.

Many of the other Lakeside employees of 1987 have names and



*Hydrostatic cooker installation, 1967.*





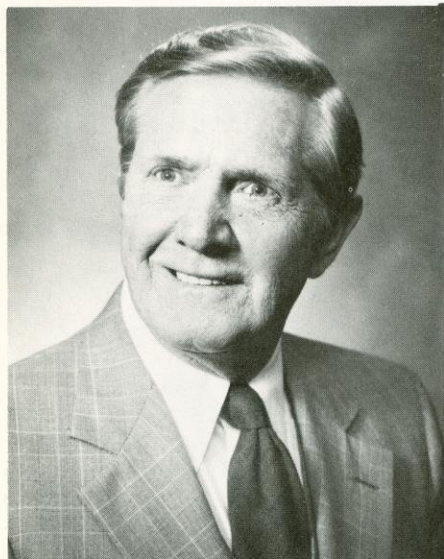
Robert W. Ferguson

families intimately tied to Lakeside's historical past. Names like Anderson, Brady, Cavanaugh, Ney, Sitkiewitz and Yanda carry a part of the Lakeside tradition into the future. New names are being added all of the time.

The history of Lakeside has centered around its ability to produce. Production concerns were of the highest priority from the time of Albert Landreth into the modern age.

As the Company looks to the future, other aspects of the business are emerging, developing and making their own unique contribution to the success of the business. Sales, Service, Marketing, Data Processing, Human Resources, Finance and Administration, Quality Assurance and other disciplines are taking on new and different roles. Each department is doing the best it can to help move the Company forward.

It must finally be said that throughout the 100 year history of Lakeside Packing Company, there



Stan Wachowiak

have been unsuccessful ventures. There have been times when ideas and plans have gone awry, times of frustrations and unfulfilled expectations.

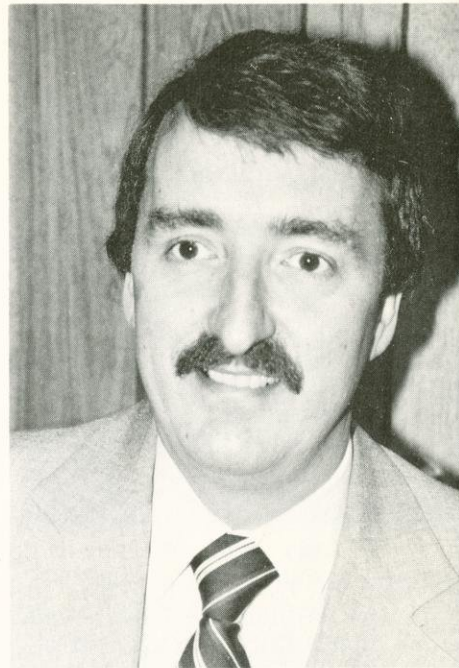
At these and other times, what sets Lakeside Packing Company apart from other companies is the quality of its employees.

Lakeside Packing Company's employees care about their work. They are proud of the jobs they do and the quality of Lakeside's products. In peak production times, they are quick to respond to problems and get the job done correctly.

They are hardworking, and their energy is seemingly inexhaustible. Their loyalty is extraordinary. Lakeside Packing Company's people are the heart of the Company.

In another one hundred years, Lakeside Packing Company will still be in operation though its products may be different. In another one hundred years familiar names and families will carry on a legacy established in 1887.

Because of its people, its technologies and its rich historical past, Lakeside Packing Company will continue growing on the Lakeshore for the next one hundred years.



J. Douglas Quick

*J. Douglas Quick: "As we look to the future, we are confident that the basic values which helped shape the spirit and character of our Company will lead us to even greater achievements."*

#### PRESIDENTS OF LAKESIDE PACKING COMPANY \*

1. Albert Landreth ..... 1887-1899
2. Dr. Alexander Frazier ..... 1899-1907
3. Charles Gillett ..... 1907-1921
4. Louis E. Wedertz ..... 1921-1936
5. Harry L. Wedertz ..... 1936-1961
6. Gordon A. Lund ..... 1961-1972
7. Robert W. Ferguson ..... 1972-1982
8. Stan Wachowiak ..... 1982-1986
9. J. Douglas Quick ..... 1986-Present

*\* Originally called the Albert Landreth Seed Company, 1887-1896; The Albert Landreth Company, 1896-1907, and the Wisconsin Pea Cannery Company, 1907-1921. The name of the Company was changed to Lakeside Packing Company in 1921.*

**Mr. Eggen gratefully acknowledges assistance in completing this project to:**

Rolland Anderson  
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Daniel Blitz  
John Brady  
William T. Cavanaugh  
Sarah Crabb  
Charles Holst  
Earl Miller

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*For further information on canning in Manitowoc County see Occupational Monograph 10, 1970 Series "Food Processing — A Manitowoc Triumph" Manitowoc County Historical Society.*