

Manheim Center Cheese/Milk Factory

Manheim was one of the largest cheese producing towns in Herkimer County. In 1858 there were 3320 cows and 1,087,200 pounds of cheese were manufactured that year. There were 9 factories in the town of Manheim.

The Manheim Center factory was built in the fall and winter of 1864 by Luke Snell & Company. It started manufacturing cheese in the spring of 1865. The annual average production was about 200,000 pounds of cheese. As per the US Department of Agriculture Bureau of Animal Industry, *The Cheese Industry of the State of New York* by B. D. Gilbert 1896: "The location of patrons with regard to the distance from the factory varies from ½ mile to 3 miles. Generally they are within a radius of 2 ½ miles. Milk was delivered by 8 AM or earlier. Sometimes it was delivered twice a day. The factory was usually managed by a stock company and the farmers were paid every two weeks on the total weights of the milk that they delivered to the factory. The factory usually ran from April 1 to November 1." During the winter, the farmers produced less milk and made butter with the milk that they did produce. They used the milk and butter themselves or bartered it with neighbors for other goods or food.

Cheeses were cured 18 to 25 days before sale. Prices, (as per Willard Kilts's diary) in 1892 for cheese was from 8 cents to 10 cents per pound. Butter prices were from 20 cents to 25 cents per pound.

In the 1868 atlas of Manheim, the Manheim Center Factory is listed. L. Snell and Company are the proprietors with Superintendent James McAdam and Assistant R. W. Rodgers. It shows the location as west of Cathetacane Creek by N. Timmerman's farm. The New York State Agricultural Society report 27 June 1868 reported on the Manheim Center Cheese Factory. "It was built at a cost of about \$6000 - \$7000. The size was 100 feet by 34 feet and it was three stories high. It processed the milk from 700 cows." The date of the inspection was June 9, 1868. "The factory received 17,194 pounds of milk on this date which was made into 20 cheese today. The cheese was pressed in 18 inch hoops 9 inches high. Approximately 9 pounds of milk made 1 pound of cheese. The total cheese produced to date was 501.

"Milk was set at a temperature of 84 degrees with the first scald at 90 degrees and gradually raised to 100 degrees. The salting rate was 2 ½ pounds of salt to 100 pounds of milk. The manufacturing department was in the lower story which was partially below ground and faced with a heavy stone wall. The cheeses were hoisted from the presses to the upper story which was arranged with dry rooms. The factory was under the direction of Andrew Weatherwax. All cheese seemed uniform and of high quality. The whey was fed to 150 hogs which were kept at this establishment. The average dairy size was from 20 – 45 cows with 24 patrons. The patrons were charged 2 cents per pound for manufacturing and furnishing."

In Herkimer County Cheese by Dorothea Ives, Andrew Weatherwax was one of the most famous cheese makers in Herkimer County. He won awards for his cheese and sold cheese to London. At the Centennial, he was awarded a medal of achievement. The framed certificate is on file in the Herkimer County Historical Museum.

In 1868, Ira Timmerman purchased the Manheim Center farm from C.H. Markell. The Manheim Center Cheese Factory was adjacent to this farm. Ira built the barns and the hotel and apparently made money on the sale of milk to the factory. He had a race track

built on his property for harness racing and it became an important destination for weekend amusements. People came from Little Falls and Dolgeville. The local newspapers, 1882 & 1883 attest to the large crowds who witnessed the sports.

An old ledger belonging to Ira Timmerman, lists his income in 1888 from milk sold to the Manheim Center Cheese Factory as \$840.15 on 119,156 pounds of milk. In today's comparison that would be about \$1.42 per 100 pounds of milk. The following year 1889, he lists under Timmerman Cheese Factory, his annual income to be \$791.11 on 121,425 pounds of milk. The dates of milk being sold were from April through November. The ledger then skips to 1901, January milk was listed in quarts: 2287 quarts sold at 3 cents per quart totaled \$68.61 minus \$5.71 for cartage, leaving a balance of \$62.90. The price per quart dropped in the spring and early summer to 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cents per quart. By this date, the Timmerman's were delivering bottled milk to Little Falls, to both private homes and to the factories. The milk sale route was developed by Ira's son William and his boys, Clarence & William Ira. Apparently any extra milk was sold to the cheese factory or made into butter as there were entries for funds received from the cheese factory. Towards the end of 1903, November \$41.49 was received from the condensed milk factory. William Ira Timmerman moved in with Grandfather Ira with the promise of inheritance of the Manheim Center Farm in exchange for care of Ira and management of the farm. Ira Timmerman died in 1904.

When the Little Falls/ Dolgeville railroad was finished in 1893, it was just behind the Manheim Center Cheese factory which was now called the milk station. Now it was convenient to load the fluid milk onto the railroad cars for shipment to the larger cities. Cheese was still made at the factory but in smaller amounts. There was a much larger demand for fluid milk in the cities. This was the era of the factory and many immigrants found work there. Manheim Center Milk Station had a pond near by where ice was harvested in the winter. This ice could then be used to keep the milk cool during shipment.

With the 1929 crash, tough economic situations arose. The Manheim Milk Station suffered some severe financial problems. The treasurer of the company, Leland Cassidy misappropriated \$31,819.59 between April 1926 and April 1929. There were several hearings and judgement against Mr. Cassidy was decided April 5, 1935. Mr. Cassidy had turned over his property to the Milk Company in restitution by the end of 1929 but the milk company stated it was not complete restitution. Family stories were that the other officers of the milk company: Corliss Timmerman, Clarence Timmerman, and William Ira Timmerman borrowed money to personally pay off stockholders/farmers of the milk company. This was the end of the Manheim Center Milk Station.

The building still stands on the Ronald Timmerman property. It has been and still is used for farm machinery storage.