

The Fredonia Food Preservation Industries

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The Darwin R. Barker Historical Museum
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A note on addresses.

There were three different systems for numbering buildings in the Village of Fredonia before the current one was adopted in 1899. The first, in the mid 1850s, assigned numbers to local businesses along Main Street beginning at the West Main Street bridge. The numbering ran east to just past Eagle Street with no reference to “East” or “West.” The second, primarily for dwellings, was devised in 1883 probably to help fire fighters locate the houses when needed. The third began appearing in the early 1890s directories.

In 1899 a uniform system was adopted which we still use today. Those are the numbers used in this history.

There is one other caution which involves Cushing Street. Originally, Green Street ran south east from East Main Street, then made a bend southwest. Cushing Street ran from that bend southeast. In 1918 the Village gave the beginning leg of Green Street to Cushing Street, so that it then began at East Main Street. Green street numbers had to be totally changed. The numbering on the first leg, now Cushing Street, remained the same. However, the rest of Cushing Street had to be renumbered. It is those post-1918 numbers that are used in this history.

The Food Preservation Industries of Fredonia

Food preservation — treating fruit, vegetables, fish or meat to prevent natural early spoilage — takes many forms. Drying, smoking, salting or pickling were processes used in most households in the early period in Fredonia. The first local attempts to do any of this on a commercial scale seem to have been in 1847.

Daniel W. **Douglass**, whose sister Lydia had married Jacob **Houghton**, came here as a boy in 1811 with the **Houghton** family. In 1818 he clerked in his brother-in-law’s village store. Going into business with **Todd & Robbins** as **Todd, Douglass & Robbins**, he built a distillery in 1824 just past *63 Water Street*, using fattening cattle to grind grain for his mash.

In 1832 he moved his general store to *37 W. Main Street*, a new three-story brick building on the corner of Main and Center streets. In 1838 he took his nephew into the business as D. W. **Douglass & Co.**, and early in **1847** they tried kiln drying Indian corn at the old distillery, turning out about 15 bushels per hour. *The Fredonia Censor* of 13 April 1847 commented that “The enterprise is one deeply interesting to the citizens of Chautauqua county, since the exportation of their surplus crop of corn, in unprepared condition, with all of the present means of transportation at command, cannot be made profitable business. We trust it will succeed, and open a new source of profit to our farming community.” Although it was the only such establishment in western New York, and in three days they could do about 400 bushels, nothing more is heard of this particular venture.

A. S. **Moss** and A. C. **Cushing** were pioneers in planting Concord grape vines around 1859, according to **Edson's History** (p.421). They grew other fruits as well. Early in 1864 they began a recruiting effort to form a Grape Growers' Association in Fredonia. On 27 February a meeting was held which then adjourned to 5 March. Although no follow-up account appeared in the newspapers, **Moss** was listed as President of such an association in 1866. In the spring of 1867 **Moss** and **Cushing** along with P.H. and D.H. **Stevens** formed the Fredonia Fresh Fruit Canning Co. They bought 40 acres to raise fruit and tomatoes and put up two buildings at 60 *Prospect Street* in **May 1867**.

It was probably the improved can-making system that had been developed during the Civil War that encouraged them to begin this effort. However, in January 1868, the plant was destroyed by fire and no canning establishments were attempted again until **1881**. On 26 February 1868 the owners advertised a sale at public auction of 20 acres on Prospect Street and 18 acres on Kapple Street (Lakeview Avenue) containing choice grapes, strawberries, raspberries and apples. Also to be sold a one horse spring market wagon, a steam boiler, and a press. In that 26 February issue of the *Censor* also appeared an article about an independent A. S. **Moss** enterprise that he had begun in **1867**. It was a new method of preserving produce called "**Smith's system**" consisting of scalding the fruit and then exposing it to "sulphurous acid gas" which prevented decay. Alternatively fruits or vegetables were preserved by "deoxygenating with charcoal."

Nothing more is heard of any other fruit drying enterprises until 1877 when the 18 July issue of the *Censor* carried an article headed "American Apples Abroad." It included the statement, "We notice the report of a very large export trade in dried fruits last year, mostly apples, which amounted to over \$2,000,000. The large fruit product of this county this year should be provided with a foreign market. Who will start a drying apparatus?"

This was followed up in the next issue by an item signed "F.M.K.," very likely Francis M. **Kidder** who had a cider mill on Chestnut Street. In part he wrote, "With the abundance of fruit in this section, there should be other methods of disposing of it aside from making it into the conglomeration of an article called cider, which would not be fit for vinegar, if it did not work itself clear from the leaves and filth that is raked up with a majority of the apples that are carried to a cider mill. (We have got through making that article as above described.)

"And now where is the man or men that will take an interest in a drying apparatus to convert the golden apple into an article adapted for food to be shipped to all climates. The small clean picked apples, with cores and peelings of manufactured fruit can be converted into boiled cider, jellies and vinegar. — Such an institution will pay, and besides all this there are hundreds of idle, willing hands that would be usefully employed, for a few months at least, that would otherwise remain idle. Who will be the benefactors of our town?"

The answer came in 1878. U. E. **Dodge** and G. D. **Hinckley**, who had taken over the **Risley Seed Co.**, began the "Fredonia Fruit Drying Co." at **Hinckley's** seed store at 51 *West Main Street*. This process dried fruits such as raspberries and apples, as well as sweet corn, using a heat source placed below racks of wire cloth on which the produce was spread.

There are positive comments about the company in the *Censor* in July and again in October 1878, and then silence, although George W. **Sisson** of 110 East Main Street, advertised himself as an Agent for the Pacific Fruit Evaporator in the *Censor* of 26 May 1880. Another very short-lived attempt was the Union Fruit Drying Co. at 304 *East Main Street*, the residence of R. W. **Gardner** (as with **Dodge** and **Hinckley**, another early seed man), which appeared in **1881** and then promptly disappeared.

On 7 April 1881 a new Fredonia Canning Co. was incorporated. The company began making cans in L. B. **Greene's** old tannery building behind 23 *East Main Street* until permanent buildings could be put up. They were going up in May and June of 1881 about at today's 180 *Eagle Street*. By 1883 the company was experiencing difficulty and in April 1885 the factory was auctioned off. Part of it was leased by a Mr. **Flynn** of Buffalo for an apple barrel factory.

The property was sold to T. S. **Hubbard** and Henry W. **Thompson**, two of the principal stockholders, who leased it at a nominal rent to E. D. **Fisher**, who had been in charge of their food processing operation since 1883. (He lived at 139 *Eagle Street*.) **Fisher** tried to find new backers but with little success. In 1886 the factory stood idle while A. H. **Hilton** and G. M. **Tremaine** tried to find a purchaser. Finally, **Winter & Prophet**, a canning company in Mount Morris NY bought the business and installed Thomas **Yardley** of Lock Haven PA to run it as Thomas **Yardley & Co.**, with **Winters** and **Prophet** making up the "company." Once again the operation languished and, in the summer of 1889, the factory once more stood idle. The property was sold by **Winters & Prophet** to the Fort Stanwix Canning Co. of Rome NY, the Jones Wholesale Grocery Co. of Akron OH and A. F. **French** of Buffalo, in April 1890. **French** moved here to manage the business, which he did for eleven years while Nathaniel W. **Farrand** was in charge of the canning process. During the off season, part of the factory was used to manufacture grape baskets.

Some disagreements arose between stockholders and, in 1896, **Jones** and **French** became the owners of the Fredonia factory. J. Lloyd **Jones**, who lived in Buffalo, became President although the local newspapers always referred to the operation as the French canning company. In 1899 the two added another facility in North East, and in 1900 **French** bought property on East Main Street preparatory to beginning a new company of his own.

(The *Dunkirk Evening Observer* of 4 August 1988 carried the first of a two-part series on local canning industries. One paragraph reads, "In 1899, a company from Sheridan moved into the plant once owned by the U. S. Canning Co., a subsidiary of the Cudahy Packing Co. of Chicago, at 180 *Eagle Street* in Fredonia. Under the management of Charles **Gervas**, the former Sunset Co., begun in 1882 by Al **Domenico**, became the **Gervas** Canning Co." This is a terribly confused account. Albert **Domenico** wasn't born until 1924. His father Anthony and grandfather, Frank **Domenico** didn't come to the U.S. until 1894. In a 14 July 1982 interview, Charles **Barresi** said that "**Gervas**" started the Sunset Canning Co. on Fort Hill [45 *Lakeview Avenue*] in 1899. However, Charles & Russell **Gervas** are not supposed to have begun a small canning factory there until 1917, perhaps taking over the earlier factory building. These businesses will be taken up separately in the order of their beginnings.)

In 1898 Dr. William **Park**, a dentist at 38-40 *E. Main Street*, began the Fredonia Fruit & Vegetable Co. at 111 *Eagle Street*, but it only seems to have lasted a year or two. He also designed and built a catamaran, the "Fredonia," that cruised the Thousand Islands, and he was associated with John S. **Parker** in making and selling Fredonia Washers. Around 1898 he rented 111 *Eagle Street* out to Burt A. **Flagg** as a wine cellar and, in 1909, used it to raise mushrooms.

Tony R. **Liberty** began a macaroni factory in 1898 at 73 *Prospect Street*. In 1902 he took his son George into partnership as T. R. **Liberty & Son**. The business is no longer listed in the directories after 1909; however, the *Magazine of Industry* discussed the thriving business in an issue of 1912, and the Sanborn Insurance maps show the Tony **Liberty** Macaroni Factory in place through 1951.

The Pomfret Fruit Co. of Sherman J. **Lowell** and Arthur W. **Marsh**, both fruit and grape farmers in Milford (Lamberton), ran from 1900 to 1910, but **Downs History**, Vol.2, p.201 says it was “a fruit shipping concern.”

When A. F. **French** began his own company on East Main Street in 1900, the United States Canning Co. continued at *176-188 Eagle Street*. In 1902 they put up a new factory in Farnham, but in 1908 they stopped using the Fredonia facility. In November 1909, the company bought the defunct Erie Preserving Co. and the hope was that they would begin to use the Fredonia plant again. They did to some extent, although they also had factories at North East, Westfield, Wampville (Niagara County), Buffalo and Rome where most of the work went on. In December 1909 they began installing new machinery in the Fredonia building, but in 1910 they went into receivership and the company closed down.

A. F. **French's** canning company, beginning in 1900, the Fredonia Preserving Co., was at *180-186 East Main Street*. The articles of incorporation listed John F. **Mixer**, A. F. **French**, B. H. **Phillips**, H. G. **Huntley**, and F. E. **Brockett** (of Rome NY) as directors. **Huntley** and **French** were the majority stockholders.

In May 1902 they added a building for grape juice and, in 1903, Adam P. **Chessman**, who had started the Sinclairville Canning Co. in 1899, consolidated his business with the Fredonia Preserving Co., becoming Vice President. At the same time, the **Shumakers** brought in their Silver Creek Preserving Co. When the United States Canning Co. failed in 1910 and its various plants were sold off, the Fredonia plant at *176-188 Eagle Street* was taken by **French**, as was the Model City plant near Niagara Falls NY. They also built additional plants at Wilson and Newfane NY.

There was an extensive fire at the Eagle Street site in October 1914 in which the buildings the company had there were destroyed. In 1918 the largest building on East Main Street, the wooden factory building, burned, although the warehouse and other structures were saved. New buildings were put up and the company continued to operate.

In May 1933, Carl **Spoto**, who had worked at the Fredonia Preserving Co. since 1903, bought the facilities at *186 East Main Street* at a foreclosure sale and planned to run it as the Brocton Preserving Co. Plant No. 2. (He had owned the Brocton company since 1928.) Although tomatoes were to be the primary product, **Spoto** expected to turn the plant into a wine cellar as soon as Prohibition was repealed. His plant processed many types of vegetables and fruits under a variety of private and buyers' labels into the 1950s before closing down.

One of the early wine makers was Henry **Card**. He and Levi E. **Cowden** started a small wine and grape juice company, Henry **Card & Co.**, in 1901 at *112 West Main Street*, a two-story building they had put up for that purpose. In May 1905 they began construction of an additional storage building that was 50' by 75'. With the advent of Prohibition, they began producing only grape juice. (Mr. Robert **Maytum**, Sr. remembered a story that the Henry **Card & Co.** grape juice casks had instructions, in the form of warnings, on how to make the juice into wine. However, a similar story exists about William **Russo** and associates.)

By 1921 Henry **Card & Co.** had moved to *123-125 Cushing Street*, but **Card** then bought the bankrupt Grape-Ola concern, then at *112 West Main Street*, and moved back there, where the business continued under that name for a short time. By 1923 it was listed as Henry **Card & Co.**, Grape Products and, by 1925, as Henry **Card & Co.**, Soft Drinks. Nathan P. **Taft** joined H. C. **Card** in making grape juice concentrate for about two years.

Another grape juice concern of the time was the **Gleason** Fruit Juice Co. of Ripley which established a plant in Fredonia early in 1902. After receiving permission from the Village to

extend the spur line (serving the canning factory) across Union Street, they built a plant on the corner of Union and Cushing streets (*123-125 Cushing Street*) to make “unfermented wine,” the first such venture in Fredonia.

In March 1902, W. A. **Holcomb**, head of the company, announced that a contract to build a two-story brick factory 60' x 85' had been let to **Sly & Coddington**. Seven carloads of five-gallon glass carboys had already been ordered for storage, and the building was well along in May 1902. By 1908 the company was in difficulty and in December it was bought by a Mr. **Walker** of Erie, who represented a syndicate, but it did not survive past 1909. The building stood vacant through 1911 and then was taken by the **Joy (Gioia), Bellanca & Co.** macaroni makers.

An earlier macaroni maker was Frank **LoGrasso**, who had a macaroni and grape juice factory at *60 Prospect Street*, across the tracks from the passenger depot in the former **Moss, Cushing and Stevens** Canning Co. building. A May 1902 article in the *Censor* adds “Adjoining the macaroni factory is the large wine cellar of Alfonso **Mancuso**.” **LoGrasso's** partner was Tony **Liberty**. The building was destroyed by fire in March 1904. There is also supposed to have been a macaroni factory at the corner of Orchard and Cleveland streets owned by **Cosimo** and Fillippo **Drago** in 1902.

Charles **Spero** began manufacturing wine at *149 Prospect Street* by 1906. (The 1906 Directory has “49,” probably an error.) The company then became **Spear & Martino** (Charles **Spear** [*sic*] and Tony **Martino**) wine manufacturers at *149 Prospect Street*. In the 1912 Directory the company is listed as the **Spear** Wine Co. at *149 Prospect Street*. By 1923 they were manufacturers of grape juice at that location. They apparently split up after 1935. In 1938 Anthony **Martina** at *149 Prospect Street* had the **Martina** Wine Co. which then ceased to exist.

Gerardo **Vinciguerra**, who lived at *49 Lakeview Avenue*, built a winery at *47 Lakeview* in 1909. It ran for many years, closing down in 1925. In 1951 the site was used for the Sunset Frozen Foods Co.

The **Joy** (they later reverted to **Gioia), Bellanca & Co.** macaroni manufacturers consisted of Alphonse **Joy** and Philip **Bellanca**, who began their business in 1910 at *123-127 Cushing Street*, the old **Gleason** Grape Juice Co. location. By 1917 the business was **Gioia Bros.** (Anthony and Albert **Gioia**), which they continued until 1919, when they moved it to Rochester NY.

Another local macaroni manufacturer was Peter **Elardo**, who began by 1910 at his home at *111 Cushing Street*. He had his macaroni factory in part of the canning plant buildings at *176-188 Eagle Street*, which were destroyed by fire in October 1914. He had been making wine as well and he continued with that until 1921, at which point there was a fire at the winery. He tried manufacturing silk in 1923 at *80 Prospect Street* but soon abandoned that effort as well.

The old canning factory buildings that burned in 1914 included a veneer factory that had been started by A. F. **French** in July 1912. He had Carl **Wright** cutting veneer there with E. J. **Turk** manufacturing grape baskets from the veneer culls. That enterprise, of course, also was destroyed by the 1914 fire.

Perhaps inspired by the Armour company's acquisition of a plant in Westfield, the Cudahy Packing Co. explored the possibility of acquiring a grape-juice factory in Fredonia. In the fall of 1912 arrangements were made to lease A. F. **French's** Fredonia Preserving Co. building at *182 East Main Street* for a year. At the same time the company took an option from **French** on land adjoining his factory lot. Henry T. **Wilbur** was taken on as the buyer for grapes.

Starting in October, the company pressed about 1,000 tons, resulting in 160,000 gallons, the company's first venture into the grape industry.

After much local discussion, a group of citizens raised enough money to buy land along the DAV & P RR tracks on Newton Street to guarantee the company would build here. In May 1913 the agreement was finalized, the land presented to the company, and work on the factory's foundation was begun. Locally, while the plant was to be known as the Puritan Pure Food Products Co., the grape juice was packed as Red Wing Grape Juice. A new warehouse was almost completed by October 1914 and another building was in preparation specifically for apples to be processed into juice, jelly and vinegar.

Other buildings went up during 1914 for putting up tomatoes in glass jars, and for processing strawberries and raspberries. In addition to Red Wing Grape Juice they produced catsup, jellies, jams, chili sauce, preserves, cider, cider vinegar and canned tomatoes. The local superintendent in charge of the operation was A. R. **Miller**. In an effort at consolidation and improved functioning, at the beginning of 1918, the general and sales offices were moved here from Chicago, at which point the Puritan designation was changed to that of its leading product, Red Wing.

In May 1919 the plant was enlarged, despite a brief strike by the construction workers, who wanted an increase from their 40 cents an hour wage.

In 1938 Red Wing bought out the Farm King Packaging Co. and moved it from its *123-127 Cushing Street* location (where the Fredonia Macaroni Co. had been earlier), to their *196 Newton Street* lot. The Farm King label was retained through 1945. During World War II Red Wing had some 20 Italian POWs working at the plant. In 1965 a new peanut butter operation was added, and in December 1966 Red Wing acquired the General Preserving Co. of Brooklyn, continuing production at the Brooklyn plant that had been in operation for over 40 years. In 1968 it was moved here. In 1971 Red Wing began producing mayonnaise, salad dressing, syrups and barbecue sauce.

In 1977 the company was purchased by Ranks, Hovis, McDougall Ltd., a British firm. After a good deal of internal discussion, in 1992 Red Wing abandoned the seasonal processing of local fresh tomatoes in favor of year-round use of California tomato paste in making catsup.

The ownership and management history of Red Wing is a complicated one. The Cudahy Co. of Chicago began the Puritan Food Products Co. in 1912 with the main offices in Chicago overseeing the local management. Around 1922, Leon C. **Steele** was brought in from a Cudahy plant in Charlotte NC to try to improve production and profits. He was successful enough that the Cudahy family acquired Red Wing from the Cudahy Co. and **Steele** became a minority stockholder. **Steele** was head of Red Wing until 1938 when he became Vice President at the Cudahy Co. and was replaced as general manager by Louis F. **Long**. **Steele** died in 1945 and, when **Long** was named President of Cudahy in 1952, **Steele's** son, Edward C. **Steele**, who had been a salesman at Red Wing since 1947 and sales manager from 1950-1952, became general manager.

In 1961 **Steele** and his sisters acquired a controlling interest in Red Wing and he became its President. Ranks, Hovis McDougall Ltd bought **Steele** out in 1976, at which point Douglas H. **Manly** became President and CEO until his retirement in 1989. The company was sold to Tomkins Industries PLC of the United Kingdom in 1990, who sold to the United States food processing division of Ralcorp Inc. in 1998 and renamed the local operation Carriage House Foods, changing the name but continuing the industry that had begun here in 1912.

In 1913, shortly after Red Wing's beginning, Mark L. **Woodcock**, who had a general store at *187-189 West Main Street*, started a cider and vinegar manufacturing operation at *252 Water Street* which he named the Apple Products Co., later moving to *150 Cushing Street*, a building he put up at that time. He continued the business through 1916.

The Fredonia Salsina Canning Co. was begun in 1916 by Tony A. **Gugino** at *178 Prospect Street*. This was the site of an old planing mill which had the machinery removed and was refurbished for food processing. As the name indicates, the firm first concentrated on making tomato paste, although in later years they processed strawberries, cherries, raspberries, beans and apples. A new warehouse was built on Prospect Street, near Orchard across from the factory. Then the old warehouse was acquired by Fredonia Products Co. in 1943. Finally, in 1963, they bought the rest of the site and buildings. In 1971 the "Stanwill Corporation" gave the land to the Village.

In September 1917 Thomas **Fitzgerald** formed the Fredonia Fruit Juice Co., Inc. with himself as President; A. R. **Maytum**, Secretary; Ira **Watson**, Treasurer; and Mark L. **Woodcock** as manager at the *150 Cushing Street* location. The stockholders dissolved the corporation in January 1920 and **Woodcock** returned to his Apple Products operation until 1924, after which the building stood vacant for some years. **Fitzgerald** tried manufacturing concentrated fruit juices for soda fountains and table use at his cement warehouse at *89 Glisan* (now Newton) St. but soon abandoned the effort.

For some reason, 1917 was a start-up year for a number of food processing ventures. One that began as a small winery was that of Meyer **Star**.

Meyer **Star** was born in Russian Poland in 1869 or 1870. He married in 1891 and the couple immediately left for the United States. They lived primarily in Bradford PA where Meyer worked as a house painter, and served as a cantor in the local synagogue. He also traveled, selling kosher food and wine to the congregations he served as a visiting cantor. In **1916** he formed the **Star** Wine Co. of New York, and by 1917 he had leased a winery building about at *214 Central Avenue*, Fredonia, (in front of today's Fenton Hall) from H. T. **Wilbur**, who had been the grape purchasing agent for Red Wing and a wine manufacturer from 1902 at *214 Central Avenue*.

In 1920 Meyer **Star** bought a small winery at *200 Water Street*. It had been operating as the Fredonia Wine Co., the business that had been H. T. **Wilbur's** until he leased his Central Avenue winery to the **Stars**. They continued to produce sacramental wine, permitted under the Volstead Act, (Prohibition) until 1926 when they switched to making catsup. (The original winery is now the rear portion of the present food processing building.)

The family, operating as Fredonia Products Co., got back into the wine business in 1933. In 1943 they took over the old warehouse of the Fredonia Salsina Co. at *178 Prospect Street*.

The Cliffstar Corp. was formed in 1971, adding a grocery division to pack fruit juices, catsup, etc. under private labels. As the Ralco Development Co. they bought a 57 acre site in Dunkirk in 1977. They have since added other food lines, acquired other food processing businesses and added manufacturing facilities in other states.

Although the record is not entirely clear, it is said that Charles and Russell **Gervas** began a small canning factory at Fort Hill (Lakeview Avenue) in 1917. Charles had already built greenhouses near his home at *138 Cushing Street*, just opposite the United States Canning Co. location. When Russell died in the influenza epidemic in October 1918, Charles invited his two brothers-in-law to come into the business to take over the greenhouse operation. Early in 1919 he bought the old canning company property and built a new factory building for his **Gervas**

Canning Co. of *180 Eagle Street*. (That was the office address, with the processing plant itself about at *144 Cushing Street*) In 1924 he stepped down to become Vice President, while Stanley J. **Drago**, Treasurer, became President with M. E. **Drago** as Secretary. They were **Gervas's** wife Mary's brothers.

The plant burned early in 1934, but by March a new building was begun, which was completed during the summer. Charles **Gervas** died in April and his wife continued the greenhouses until 1937, when her daughter Mae and husband Cosmo **Trippe** took it over. **Trippe** added two more greenhouses, renaming it the **Trippe** Greenhouses. He retired in 1973, demolished the three greenhouses, and "planted a lawn."

The canning company continued under the **Dragos**. During World War II, along with other canning companies in the area, they obtained military contracts for green and wax beans. After Stanley **Drago** died in March 1951, his daughter Katherine became President. (In 1953 she married James B. **McAbee**.) The Stanley Packing Co. of Forestville was part of the business, which Mrs. **McAbee** maintained through the 1960s, but she finally closed it down.

In the same year that the **Gervas** Canning Co. began (1919), two other food processing companies started up. One was Grape-Ola, a grape juice processing company with headquarters in New York City, which opened a plant at *112 West Main Street*. In 1919, taking the plant over from Henry **Card** & Co., new machinery was installed, but the company did not do well. W. J. **Lowrie**, local manager, stockholder and one of the directors, retired from his Fredonia position in February 1920. By the following year, the plant was auctioned off at a bankruptcy sale. It was bid in by Henry **Card** and Reuben **Wright**, acting for the reorganized company. **Wright** transferred his share of the ownership to his daughter and son-in-law Charles and Manta W. **Ellis**. The company sold Grape-Ola and **Card's** Grape Juice. In 1926 Henry **Card** doubled the size of the plant again, and in 1928 he sold the business to the Welch Grape Juice Co., who operated as the United Grape Products Co. at *112 West Main Street* through the early 1930s.

The second company to begin in 1919 was the Excelsior Canning Co. at *214-220 Eagle Street*, but almost immediately they changed their name to the Eagle Canning Co. "as a matter of business convenience." Formed to can fruits and vegetables, the company advertised for tomatoes and berries

The partners were Nicholas J. **Gugino**, Charles **Leone**, Frank J. **Gugino**, Anthony **Battaglia** and Joseph **Christina**. Ground was broken on 15 March 1920 for a plant on Eagle Street, on a lot adjoining the old Electric Light Plant on the north. The factory buildings, which consisted of a large wooden main building, 50' x 100' containing the canning machinery, a concrete block and frame warehouse, 30' x 100' a power house 24' x 40' and a loading platform 50' x 80' were all destroyed by fire on 19 June 1931, along with a large supply of tomato hampers and \$20,000 in lost produce. The enterprise was only partly covered by insurance and the buildings were never replaced.

In 1919 the Colonial Wine Co. began at *109 Eagle Street*. With the advent of Prohibition, it became the Colonial Grape Products Co. with William M. **Mehl**, President; H. O. **Lanza**, Secretary/Treasurer. (This is not to be confused with the Colonial Grape Products Co. of California, which began in 1920, a combination of California wineries.) By 1923 A. W. **Russo** became President, continuing to produce grape products until Prohibition was abandoned, at which point **Russo** revived the Colonial Wine Co. in 1933. The *Censor* of 19 May 1933 reported the Colonial Wine Co. was to start production soon, as was the **Star** winery on Water Street. The article added, "In New York city there are several wineries making the new drink [3.2% wine], including Colonial Grape Products company." In 1947 **Russo** moved the business to Dunkirk.

In 1921 Louis **Gennuso** began a grape juice manufacturing business at *100 Eagle Street*. By 1923 it had become **Gennuso & Son** (Louis and Frank **Gennuso**) catsup manufacturers. The business closed down by 1925.

Joseph L. **Lazarony** was listed as a cider manufacturer at *130 Eagle Street* in the 1921 Directory, but from 1923 on he is described as a wine manufacturer.

The Fredonia Macaroni Co. was started by Anthony, Casimer, and Rose **Ware** of Dunkirk in 1923 in a two-story brick building at *123-127 Cushing Street*. The business was taken over by Anthony **Guarino** and C. G. **Pfluger** in 1930, but the building burned in March 1931 and the company ceased to operate. The property itself was taken by the Farm King Co. in 1935.

Anthony F. **Drago**, who had worked at the **Gervas** Canning Co. from its beginnings in 1919, left **Gervas** early in 1927 and formed the Bison Canning Co. with James **Drago** of Buffalo and Joseph A. and Frank **Drago** of Fredonia. They leased a small abandoned factory at Brant and put up a small number of cans. In 1928 they moved to a new, large plant in Angola. The company doubled its manufacturing facilities and its output with the packing operation at the Angola facility, while the office remained in Fredonia at the **Russo** Building (*1 Park Place*) through 1940. In 1941 **Drago** had taken over as President of the Empire Seed Co. from **Polvino** and the canning company was apparently closed down.

Nathan Preston **Taft** had been the manager of Henry **Card & Co.**, at least as early as 1921, through 1927. In 1928, apparently with the backing of A. F. **French** and C. F. **Shumaker** (of Silver Creek), he formed the American Grape Juice Corporation at *180-182 East Main Street*, that is, the location of **French's** Fredonia Preserving Co. The company continued at that location with **Taft** as President and, by 1938, with his son Richard M. **Taft** as Vice President. In 1946 they traded positions and continued through 1948. The company was sold off in 1948 to **Bedford** Products Corp. who took over the entire property as a warehouse. In 1951 Red Wing took the building, also as a warehouse and dormitory. N. P. **Taft** died in June 1951.

In 1933 Fred W. **Bedford** began **Bedford** Products in the cellar of his Westfield home. As the business expanded, he moved to a packing house on the Wilson Rood farm in Westfield, the Huntley packing plant in Brocton (1934), and then the old **Dotterweich** Brewery in Dunkirk (1938). In 1945 he bought Valley Juices Inc., then sold it, in 1947, to a Chicago company. In 1948 **Bedford** Products bought the Lake Shore ice house in Dunkirk and the American Grape Juice Co. at *180-182 East Main Street* in Fredonia. **Bedford** was said to be the first local processor to manufacture and market frozen juice concentrate (*ca.* 1949). He sold the processing and storage plant to Red Wing soon after, and sold the **Bedford** Co. itself to Red Wing in 1954.

In 1935 the Brocton Preserving Co., Inc. Plant No.2 was being operated by the **Spotos** at *186 East Main Street*. Despite fires in October 1937 and November 1943, the canning plant and warehouse continued to function until 1946. However, in an interview, Mr. Sam **Drayo**, Sr., said that after the second fire, in 1943, the **Spotos** went into bankruptcy, so the company must have been taken over by others at that time. In 1946 the building was occupied by the B & F Cannery Co-Op Inc. with Peter **Pero** of Brant as President. Later Charles **Winters**, also of Brant, became President, after which the building was taken over by Buffalo Frosted Foods.

Also in 1935 Nicholas G. **Heary**, who had been a purchasing agent for Red Wing, formed his own competing company. With Nicholas H. **Smith**, Robert T. **Logan** and Alfred **Jefferson**, he began the Farm King Packing Co. *The Fredonia Censor* of 29 March 1935 announced that construction on the plant at *123-127 Cushing Street* was under way on the site of the Fredonia Macaroni Co. which had burned in 1931. They intended to specialize in tomato

products: catsup, chili sauce, tomato juice and tomato puree. Eventually the company went into bankruptcy and was purchased by Red Wing in August 1938.

The Old Chautauqua Packing Co. was formed in January 1937 by Walter **Gloor**, John **McCraith** and Donald **Guest**, using the R. C. **White** building (*18 Cleveland Avenue*) for their factory. They began bottling horseradish, planned to raise their own and to market it more widely if there was a demand. Apparently there was not, because they were replaced by 1938 by the **Fowler** Heating Co at the Cleveland Avenue address.

Barone & Co. was begun in 1946 by George O. (or Orazio G.) **Barone** at *31 Prospect Street* (his home) with the factory at *22 Prospect Street*. The 1949/50 Directory lists it under "Nut Shellers." In 1950 the Fredonia Seed Co. bought the *22 Prospect Street* lot, but the **Barone** enterprise continued at *31 Prospect Street*. (After 1949 the company is always referred to as "Nut Roasters.") George **Barone** died on 19 January 1952 and the business was continued under Mrs. **Barone's** ownership until 1964 when it was closed down.

Following the B & F Canners Co-Op Inc at *186 East Main Street*, Joseph and Louis **Catalano** and Louis **DeMarco** began their Buffalo Frosted Foods company in 1949. However, they suffered a series of fires (18 July 1950, 2 February 1951 and 5 July 1952). The 1952 fire leveled their processing plant and they moved temporarily to the former American Grape Juice Co. buildings at *180 East Main Street* and planned to rebuild. However, their loss of machinery worth \$65,000 plus thousands of cans of fruits and vegetables apparently was too much and the company never reopened.

Another frozen food company was begun by Frank S. **Mitchell** in 1949 at *152 West Main Street*. (The site had been a dairy before that.) **Mitchell** Foods Inc. processed frozen foods through the 1950s, adding a line of whipped toppings. However, in 1966, the Supreme Court refused to review the finding of an earlier Federal court that **Mitchell** had infringed on the patent of **Rich** Products Corp. for a non-dairy creamer. The company closed down in the early 1980s.

Shortly after Mitchell began, the **Domenicos** at *47 Lakeview Avenue* started Sunset Frozen Foods Inc., in 1952 packing frozen fruits and vegetables. The company lasted into the mid-1960s.

In the same year that Sunset Frozen Foods began (1952) Frank **Gennuso** started **Gennuso** Food Products Inc. at *47 Liberty Street*, making frozen pizzas. He then moved to the rear of *238 East Main Street*, then to *230 Porter Avenue*. In 1957 he expanded to include *109 Eagle Street*. In February 1958, Food Specialties Inc. of Worcester MA bought the **Gennuso** business. They made the Appian Way pizza mix, frozen pizzas, etc., with **Gennuso** remaining as manager of the Fredonia operation.

After that purchase, the business was moved to the old American Grape Juice Co. building in 1959 at *180 East Main Street*, the building which had been owned for a time by Red Wing and used as a warehouse, plus other land acquired from D. C. **Topliffe** in April 1959. Operations began in the refurbished building early in 1960. In September 1961, Armour & Co. of Chicago bought Food Specialties, including the former **Gennuso** business. **Gennuso** continued as plant manager for a number of years. The business was taken over by W. R. **Grace & Co.**, who closed down the plant at *180 East Main Street* in 1974.

Anthony L. **Barone** had a frozen foods operation at *33 Orchard Street* in 1955, but by 1961 it was replaced by Fredonia Aluminum.

In 1958 Frank (Scotty) and Marjorie **Ferrington** and Samuel **Mancuso** formed the Fredonia Pickle Co. at 22 Union Street, where the Farm King operation had been located, at the northwest corner of Union and Cushing streets. The business lasted only one or two years.

Anthony F. **DeMarco** had been a worker at Red Wing through 1963. He then took over the old **Gervas** Canning Co. site at *180 Eagle Street* and ran it for a short time. By 1968 the property was standing vacant and was later acquired by the Village.

At this writing (2009) only two food processors remain: Carriage House, where Red Wing had been, and Cliffstar, primarily in Dunkirk but still using the *200 Water Street* facility.