

## NEW YORK STATE MUSEUM OF CHEESE

This building was built in 1862, in Verona, NY, by Gardner Weeks and was known as the Weeks & Merry factory. Mr. Gottlieb Merry purchased the factory in 1869, and ran it until his death, when it was taken over by his son, Frederick. It is a handsome example of early factory construction. It measures 90' x 34' and has three stories. It is one of the largest and oldest cheese factories in the state. Cheese was made in this factory until 1917.

This is the "make-room" where the cheese was made. The milk was brought to the factory in horse-drawn wagons, by the farmers between 5 & 8 AM. The cans of milk were lifted from the wagons by a windless which was mounted over the receiving window. The milk was then poured into the weigh can which sat on a platform scale. It was then weighed & recorded. At this time a sample was taken (about one oz.), with a "thief" or dipper, and this put into a sample bottle. This sample was tested for the butterfat content of the milk. Each farmer had his own sample bottle which was numbered; the farmers were paid by weight and butterfat content.

Then the valve of the can (called a weigh can gate) was opened and the milk ran into the vat until it was full, where the milk was heated. Each vat held about 5,000 pounds of milk. Between the wooden part of the vat and the tin lining there was an open space which was filled with water. The water was heated by steam coming through perforated pipes running through this space the entire length of the vat. The warm water surrounding the tin lining gradually raised the temperature of the milk. The required temperature was between 82 and 86 degrees.

The next step was to ascertain if the milk was in a condition ripe enough to add the "rennet." Rennet is an ingredient used to convert raw milk into cheese. The "rennet test" was the most satisfactory way to find out the ripeness of the milk.

If the cheese was to be colored, the coloring extract was put into the milk and well mixed at least ten minutes before adding the rennet.

When the curd was set, it was ready to cut. For cutting two different knives were used. One horizontal and one perpendicular. The curd was cut lengthwise and crosswise in the vat with each knife. It was usually an hour and a half from the time heat was applied to the vat until the curd was cut.

After cutting the curd was gently stirred to prevent it from settling to the bottom of the vat and matting together. The stirring allowed the curd to shrink and expel the "whey." It was done with a hand tool called a "curd rake". After stirring, a process called "cooking the curd" took place, for about one hour. About two to four hours elapsed from the beginning of cooking until the whey was drawn. The whey was piped outside to a whey tank where the farmers took it home to feed their pigs.

As the whey passed off and the curd became dry, it matted together and was then cut into pieces piled one on top of the other in one end of the vat. The curd was turned so that excess moisture would be expelled. The curd was then ready to be ground in a "curd mill" and salted, using 2-2 3/4 lbs. of salt to 1,000 lbs. of milk. Then it was ready to press. It was dipped from the vat with a flat-sided curd pail, measured equally into hoops which were immediately placed in the press and pressure applied. They were kept under pressure 16-18 hours, then taken out of the hoops and taken upstairs by elevator to the curing room. This room was kept between 65 and 75 degrees, and well ventilated. The cheeses were turned every morning, kept clean, and remained there an average of 3-4 weeks. Then they were boxed and shipped. A 60-lb. cheddar was made here, principally for export.

The cheesemaker had an office in the factory where he kept records of receipts and payments. The testing equipment was also kept here. When this factory was built, farmers were being paid by the weight of the milk alone. As time went by, the butterfat test was introduced. Farmers were then paid by weight and butterfat content. Mr. Merry used these new innovations to produce a better product.

CHEESE MUSEUM

VOCABULARY

- ANNATTO A dye of reddish yellow made from the pulp around the seeds of a tropical tree. Used for coloring cheese, butter, etc.
- BABCOCK BUTTERFAT TEST - 1890 Method devised for testing the butterfat content of milk.
- BATTEN A strip of wood put over a seam between boards as a fastening or covering.
- CENTRIFUGE A machine using centrifugal force to separate particles of cream from milk.
- CONDUCTOR A tin receptacle used to guide milk into vat.
- CURD Any coagulated substance. The coagulated part of milk from which cheese is made; forms when milk sours.
- HOOP A mold; wooden or steel
- PLATFORM SCALE A scale with a stand to hold weigh can.
- RENNET A substance to curdle milk as in the making of cheese. The membrane lining the stomach of an unweaned animal; an extract of this stomach; causes coagulation. (Now man-made)
- VAT A large tub-like container used to hold milk for ripening.
- WEIGH CAN A can used for weighing.
- Whey The thin watery part of milk, that separates from the thicker part (curd) after coagulation.
- WINDLESS A winding device; a simple kind of winch worked by a crank for lifting.



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### OUTSIDE FEATURES

The outside construction of the building is board and batten.

The wagons carrying the milk could approach the factory by means of a road which enabled them to stop at the receiving window where the milk was unloaded.

The pond was spring fed and used to supply water to the factory. On factory's original site, the pond was situated higher.

The shutters and the cupola were used to regulate the temperature inside the factory. The doors on the second floor were loading doors, where the cheese was loaded into the wagons for delivery to the railroad station.