

LE ROY PENNSYSAVER & NEWS - APRIL 3, 2016
The Sixtieth Anniversary

by Lynne Belluscio

When I first came to the Historical Society, Jell-O was part of General Foods. The archives was based in White Plains, New York. Then in 1985, General Foods was acquired by Philip Morris and three years later, in December 1988, Philip Morris acquired Kraft, Inc. In 1990, Kraft and General Foods were combined as Kraft General Foods. By this time, the archives had been moved to Morton Grove, near Chicago.

In 1995, "General Foods" was dropped from the name (and now can only be found on the coffee-based beverage, General Foods International Coffee.) In 2015, Kraft was acquired by Heinz and it was announced that there were to be many layoffs and the headquarters were moving to downtown Chicago as a way to save money. And it seems that the archives is once again moving – but I haven't been able to find out where.

The archivist that I knew is no longer with the company. A couple of weeks ago, I was contacted by Susan Ginter Watson, Manager, Archives and Information Services of Heinz. She emailed to say that she was sending us a 1957 notebook of things from the 60th Anniversary of Jell-O that they would not be moving to their new archive. I did tell her that if she had anything else from Jell-O that they didn't want, to contact us, but I haven't heard anything and probably won't.

The notebook arrived by UPS and interestingly, tucked into a front pocket is the note "File Copy – Please return to Public Relations Library General Foods Corp. White Plains NY." There is also a letter dated August 30, 1957 from William MacFarlane explaining that the national publicity on the 60th Anniversary of Jell-O reached more than 5 million readers including *The New York Times* (557, 224 readers), the *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle* (297,660 readers), the *New York Journal-American* (724,729 readers) and the *New York Daily News* (2,156,137 readers).

Inside the notebook are 52 pages of photographs, newspaper clippings, press releases and letters. Many of the things are new to us. There is a copy of a letter

from Governor Averell Harriman to Mr. Pridgeon, Manager of the Jell-O plant on North Street, saying that he would not be able to attend the ceremonies. There is a copy of the Congressional Record of June 21, 1957 – "Hon. Harold Ostertag of New York in the House of Representatives – Jell-O Division of General Foods Corp is observing this week the 60th Anniversary of the birth of Jell-O in LeRoy. Jell-O has been an asset to LeRoy all down through the years in its employment of those desiring it and in its interest in making LeRoy a good community in which to abide, rear children and enjoy life."

There were some other "Items of Interest" from 1957:

- More than 1,000,000, packages of Jell-O are produced daily.
- Jell-O now sells for 1 ½ cents less than it did 60 years ago.
- This plant now turns out more Jell-O in one year than it did in its first 14 years of operation.
- May Wait, who coined the trade name "Jell-O," died last year in the Town of LeRoy.

The notes on production at the LeRoy plant include:

- The plant has another function – It is a printing plant. It supplies itself and other Jell-O plants with product cartons in the amount of millions a day -- all turned out on three printing presses.
- This plant consumes around 185,000 pounds of sugar in 15 ½ hours of full operation. This is twice the amount of sugar used daily by all of the families in Rochester.
- The sugar is mixed with other ingredients, such as gelatin, starch, colors, and flavors in a battery of stainless steel mixers. Each mixer can hold enough for 10,000 individual servings.
- The mixing process takes little more than five minutes per batch. Each batch is then quality tested before being released for the packing bin over the packaging machines.

- Several types of machines are used for package filling, the fastest being the Hoeller, which can turn out 85 packages per minute.

- The plant's 450 employees operate in two full shifts and one clean-up shift.



Ready to serve employees and their families - Edna Butts - Jennie Eppolito - Rose Cordaro - Irene Frigheit - Regina Carmichael



Ralph Jenner - Chas. Dusing - Mrs. New York State - Orrin Mitchell Sr. - Art Grayson



An Automatic Case Packer stirs interest

- Other Jell-O plants were located in San, Leandro, California; Hoboken, New Jersey; Chicago, Illinois and Cobourg, Ontario, Canada.

In 1964, seven years after the 60th Anniversary, Jell-O moved to Dover, Delaware, never to set foot in LeRoy again.