

Fairmont Canning Company

The Fairmont Canning Company, predecessor to Fairmont's Stokely-Van Camp, Inc., was started in Fairmont in 1919. The company founder, H. H. Allison, was involved with a canning company in Nebraska but also owned 200 acres of farmland in Rolling Green Township in Martin County. He was very impressed with the quality of farmland and crops in Martin County and, as a result, decided to invest here. Consequently, Allison, along with fifty Fairmont businessmen became shareholders in launching the Fairmont Canning Company on November 18, 1919.

Allison brought two Nebraska associates with him to Fairmont, A. F. Wentworth and Burr Taft. Together they decided on the site for the company which was at that time pasture land along the railroad right of way at East Ninth St., then just at the edge of the city.

The original board of directors was comprised of A. R. Fancher, H. H. Canright, J. C. Musser, and Wilbur Brown, all of Fairmont. Allison, Wentworth, and Taft, all from Nebraska, rounded out the board.

The first factory was up and running by August of 1920 and the company had contracted for 1,000 acres of sweet corn from area farmers. Sixty-one thousand cases of cream style corn were packed with a gross value of approximately \$100,000.00.

During the early years of the company, no dividends were paid as all earnings were retained for new equipment and buildings. The company's founder, H. H. Allison, also had a significant amount of his personal savings tied up in the company. Because he was unable to gain any immediate return on his investment, he eventually became discouraged, ill, and despondent. Consequently, he took his own life in 1921.

Leadership of the company was then transferred to A. F. Wentworth. His approach was to market their products in larger population centers such as New York and Chicago. By 1924, the company's crop acreage jumped to 5,000 acres, a second factory was added, production increased to 320,000 cases of corn, and more than 400 people were employed during their peak season.

Then, in 1926, Fairmont Canning Company began an experiment with its first cooling and freezing operations in an attempt to maintain freshness and flavor quality. Since there were no other industries of its kind to consult regarding this process, the expensive cooling and freezing rooms and equipment was experimented with by the Fairmont Canning Company. During the course of their trials, the rooms and equipment

were rejected, remodeled, and improved over time in order to finally meet the needs of the company.

Initially, freezing was considered merely a means of holding products fresh until canning. However, the prospect of marketing fresh frozen vegetables soon evolved and in turn created new problems regarding packaging, storage, transportation, and retailing. Successful packaging took years of development, initially being suitable only for large institutions. However, eventually packaging for retail trade was developed that would retain the quality and freshness of the original product.

The depression era of the 1930s saw a slowdown in production, but efforts were directed toward extending the seasonal operation and adding new products and combinations of products. This was accomplished, in part, by holding frozen vegetables in storage for future processing. Corn and peas were coupled with lima beans, soybeans, string beans, carrots, squash, rhubarb, and other products in advancing the operation of the company.

The advent of World War II brought rapid production demands bringing the gross output to eight million dollars. The company also began to participate in the processing of meat, canned turkey, and army field rations for the armed forces. In addition, the shortage of prospective employees at that time resulted in importing migrant workers and utilizing the German prisoners from Fairmont's POW camp in harvesting crops.

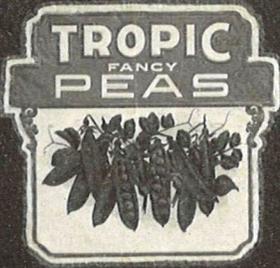
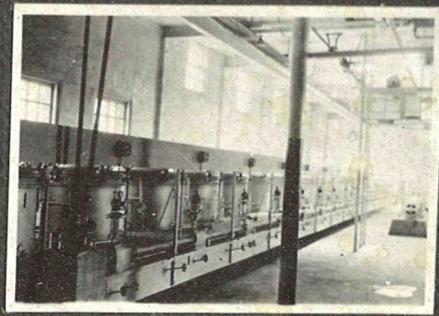
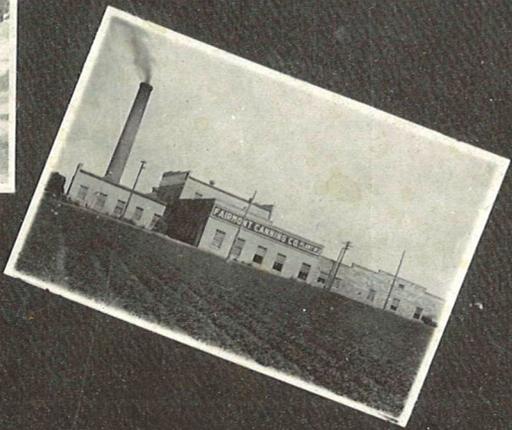
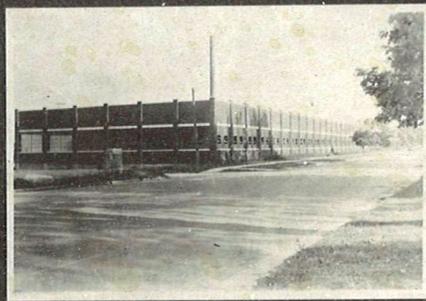
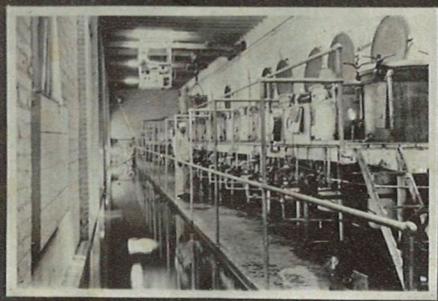
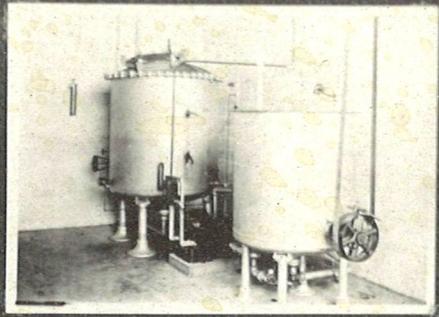
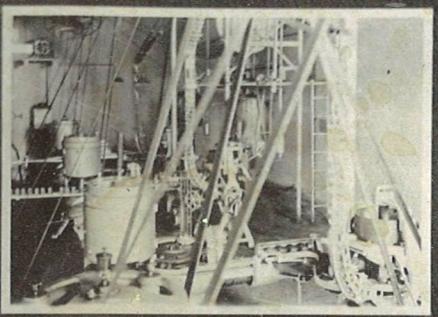
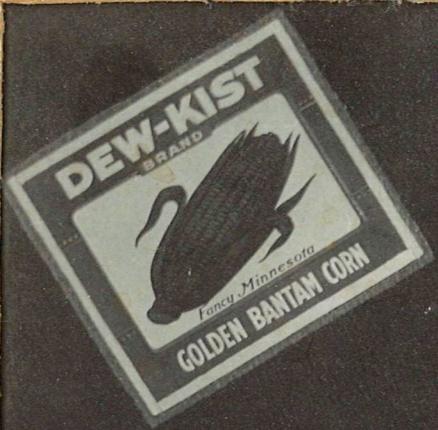
On December 15, 1955, the Fairmont Canning Company was sold to Stokely-Van Camp. The thirty-six year run of the Fairmont Canning Company, an original Martin County industry, came to an end. It was without a doubt significant to the growth and economy of this area in creating jobs while adding to the overall quality of life in Martin County and southern Minnesota.

For more information on this topic, or to become a member, visit the Pioneer Museum in Fairmont.



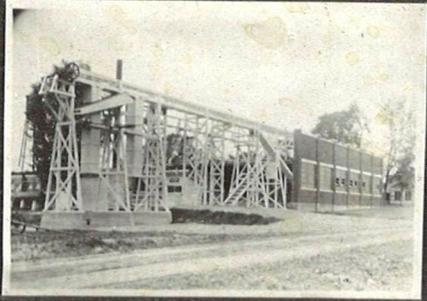
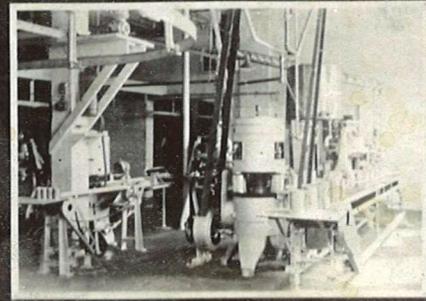
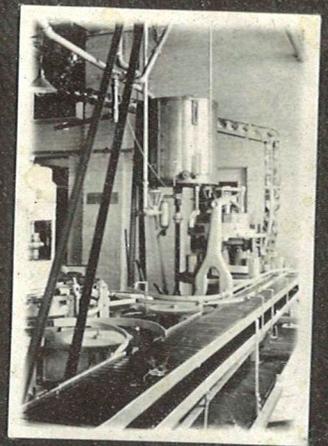
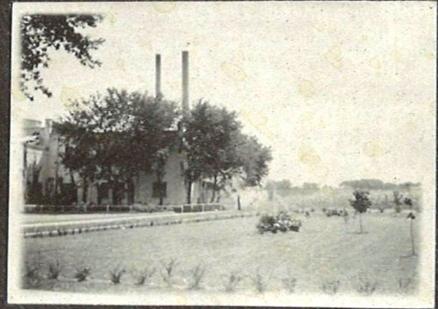
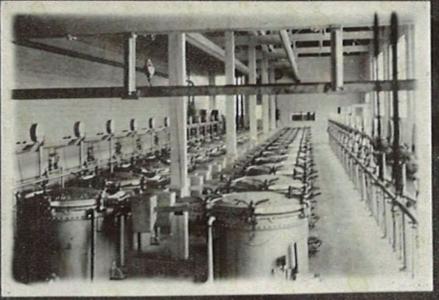
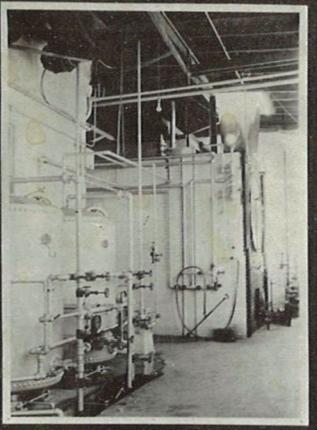






FAIRMONT CANNING COMPANY PLANTS

FANCY QUALITY FOODS





FAIRMONT CANNING CO. FAIRMONT MINN. 1-57



FRIGIDETTES
- Family -
FRESH FROZEN
GREEN PEAS
FRIEDLAND CANNING CO. CHICAGO, ILL.
1950

DUAL TEMP







