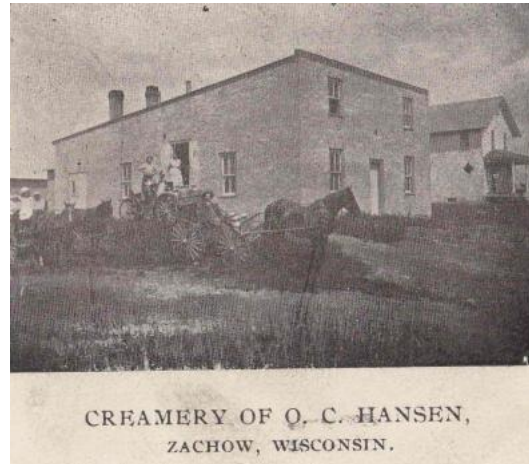


GRAF CREAMERY (By Margery Bleick-2010)

The factory now known as the Graf Creamery in Zachow, Wisconsin, was originally built and operated by Ole Hansen in 1902. Ole continued the cheese making operation until 1911 when Mr. Lorenz Ebert bought the business. In 1914, Mr. Ebert decided to move to Bonduel and sold his factory to R.H. Hein, who continued in business there until 1915. From 1915 to July 1918, Hugo Wilkowski operated the cheese factory. Louis M. Schoen, father of Mrs. Dora Baker of Zachow, bought the business in 1918 and continued the cheese making operation there until April of 1926 when Albert Graf purchased it.

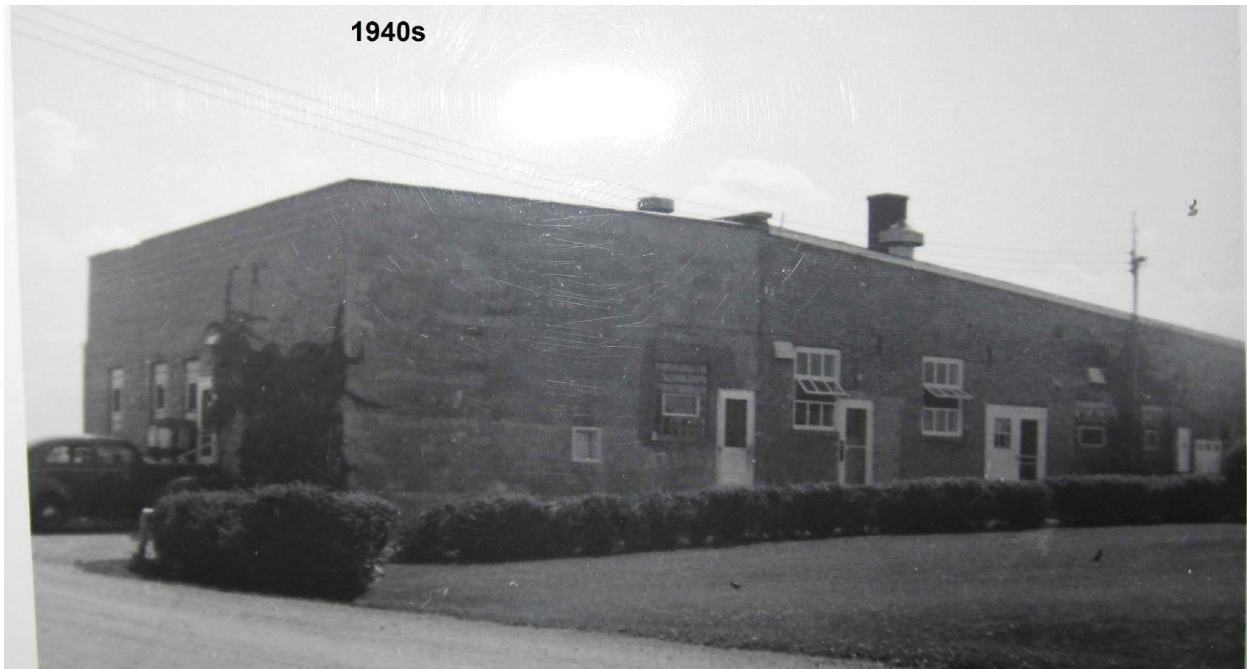


Albert, and his wife Emma, the former Emma Krueger of Cecil, were married in August of 1928 and the two of them worked in the business together until their retirement about 1970. In 1953, the Graf's daughter, Margery, was married to Robert Bleick of Bonduel and they joined her parents in the operation of the business. Margery and her mother worked together on the bookkeeping for the factory and Bob and Albert managed the plant work. Bob and Marge had four children, James, Mary, Linda, and Ruth, all of whom worked for the business at one time or another. Since Robert Bleick's illness and eventual death in 1996, their son, James, assumed the duties of corporate president and general manager, a position he held until January 1, 2009. Margery served as chief financial officer and vice president during this time and daughter, Ruth Bleick, was the secretary-treasurer of the corporation. Jim Bleick's daughter, Michelle, also was employed at the creamery assuming various duties in the plant as well as the office.

The business was sold on December 31, 2008 to Tayte and Trevor Wuethrich of Greenwood, Wi., who are the current owners. James Bleick retained his position as general manager of the company, Ruth retained her position as office manager, and Marge Bleick worked in the office and as a consultant, until December 31, 2009 when she retired. Michelle Bleick continues to work full time at the creamery testing cream and assuming various other plant and office duties.

From about 1926-1930, farmers hauled their own milk to the factory with horse and buggies in the spring, summer, and fall and used horses and sleighs in the winter. As farm trucks became more common, circa 1930, the farmers began to use their Model T pick-up trucks to transport their cans of milk to the factory. After each milking, the milk was stored in 80# steel milk cans, cooled in large ice cold water tanks, and every morning each farmer would bring their two to five cans of milk (depending on the size of their herd) to the processing plant. The cans were washed in a large can washer and returned to the farmer, who would then take the cans back to the farm to be used for the next milking.

After 1940, the Graf Creamery bought several milk trucks and began to pick up the milk from their milk patrons every morning. At first an open flat bed truck was used for milk pick-up and some years later Graf bought a single axle, 1 ½ ton truck with an insulated truck body for the farmers' milk pick-up. Later, a two ton truck was used for the same purpose. Whey and buttermilk (by-products of the cheese making and butter making process) were also hauled to the farmers by the factory trucks for feeding to the farmers' pigs and cows. In the snowy winters, the cheese factory trucks were equipped with a snowplow in the front and the roads to the farmer patrons were often plowed, as well as their driveways. The Graf Creamery had about 25-30 farmer patrons who shipped about 12,000 lbs. of milk per day in spring and summer, and about 9000 lbs. in the fall and winter.



GRAF CREAMERY-CIRCA 1940'S

Cheddar cheese and brick cheese were both manufactured at the Graf Creamery until about 1940 when Mr. Graf decided to discontinue the brick cheese operation. The Graf Creamery processed about 1200#'s of cheddar cheese per day, seven days a week. The size of the cheddar cheese produced varied from round 10# daisy blocks to a 2 ½# loaf, 5# loaf, 10# loaf, and 40# blocks. The patrons were paid for their milk on the basis of the percentage of butterfat in their milk and the weight of the milk they shipped. Except for a small percentage of retail trade to local farmers, cheese factories, and other consumers, the cheese was sold to Pauly Cheese Co, who operated a cheese storage facility in Zachow. Sometime after Pauly Cheese Co, was sold to Swift & Co., the cheese storage facility in Zachow was closed and Graf Creamery was required to transport their finished product to Green Bay. Graf Creamery discontinued their cheese making operation about 1963.

The butter making operation was begun by Albert Graf in about 1928. (This was a transition to becoming a creamery from its prior history as a cheese factory.) Then cream was picked up in 80# cream cans by Mr. Graf from the various cheese factories in the area, using a Model T pick-up truck with a box in the back. Some of the cream was also shipped to Zachow via the railroad. Often Mr. Graf would pick up the cream on one day, churn the butter early the next morning and then deliver it to the stores in the

afternoon. He started his own delivery routes to stores in Appleton, Green Bay, and Shawano to merchandise his product. He had to work long hours for the first several years and his only other employee was a bookkeeper. Albert's second full-time employee was a sixteen year old local boy-Leonard Dobratz. Leonard worked in the factory for years and later became a truck driver for Graf Creamery, a position he retained until he retired. The business grew and by 1940 the Graf Creamery was using three insulated van trucks to deliver butter and pick up the cans of cream from about 100 factories. At this time Graf employed about twenty people.

After the cream is brought into the plant, it needed to be pasteurized. At the turn of the century to the early 1920's, the method of pasteurization used was to heat the cream to 162 degrees Fahrenheit and hold it there for thirty minutes. Cream was then cooled by submerging the container in ice water until it cooled to about 52-53 degrees F. In the late 1920's the coil vat pasteurizer was used to heat and the cream and then cool it at the Graf Creamery. This process used stainless steel coils to heat the cream to the 162 degrees F., and temperature was held there for thirty minutes. After this, ice water was injected through the coils to cool the cream down as rapidly as possible to about 42 degrees F. before it could be churned into butter. The coil vat pasteurizer was used until about 1965, when the creamery started using the high temperature pasteurizer (HTST) heat exchange method. This process involves heating the cream to 194 degrees F. This process takes about two minutes, and enables the creamery to pasteurize 25,000 lbs. of cream per hour.

After the cream is pasteurized and cooled, it is ready to be churned. In the 1930's, a wooden douglas fir barrel churn was used for churning the cream. The churn was powered by electricity, and then rotated, spinning the cream around inside until it solidified into butter. This churn could hold 200 gallons of cream (1600# cream), and produce 800 lbs. of butter per churning. By the 1950's, the newer churn could hold 500 gallons of cream (4000 lbs.) and would produce 2,000 lbs, of butter per churning. In the 1960's, it was again necessary to buy a different churn. They bought an aluminum Vane barrel churn this time. This churn could hold 1,000 gallons of cream (8000 lbs.) and within 2 ½ hours would produce 4,000 lbs. of butter per churning.



GRAF CREAMERY-CIRCA 1959

In 1979, the Graf Creamery again was feeling growing pains and found it necessary to purchase a larger capacity churn, which was a continuous Simone' churn. This is a

churn which is still being used today. Cold cream is pumped in at one end of the churn and butter is extruded at the opposite end. The entire churning process only takes about two minutes. Since the churn can be run at variable speeds, it can produce 5,000 to 7,000 lbs. per hours.

After the butter is churned, it is pumped via a stainless steel pipe system to the various packaging machines. The Graf Creamery packaged and sold 1 lb. and 1/4 lb. packages, whipped butter, patties, continentals (small foil-wrapped restaurant size pkgs.) and butter-cups mainly to food service companies, cheese factories, and grocery warehouses. Graf also sells butter in larger bulk packages (68 lbs. and 25 kilos) to process cheese manufacturers, bakeries, and candy manufacturers, and condensed buttermilk, which in turn is sold to candy companies, baking mix companies, and ice cream mix companies.

Needless to say, with business expansion there comes a need for more building space. The original building has been enlarged to include two large butter storage coolers, a freezer storage room, a pasteurization room, and a laboratory, as well as a reception room and five private offices. Graf Creamery also has its own truck repair garage, boiler room, packaging supply warehouse, and more butter storage space in several other buildings on the property.

At the present time (2010), Graf Creamery employs about 35 men and women. Its six semi-tractors and eight tanker-trailers are used to pick up cream from about 30 cheese factories and its three refrigerated semi-trailers are used to deliver butter to various customers in Wisconsin and neighboring states every week.

One aspect of the butter and cheese making industry that has evolved quite a bit over time is sanitation and quality control. The federal government has implemented federal standards that Graf needs to conform to so it can be a USDA approved plant. Some of the standards include hairnets, white clothing, bacteriological testing of finished products, and stainless steel equipment. The creamery is regularly inspected by the USDA, FDA, Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, and third party auditors.

Recently, the Federal government made it mandatory to label a product according to strict specifications. When Albert Graf started manufacturing butter, it was voluntary, but is now regulated by the government. As you can see, just as the butter business has grown, so have government standards for the product. In the future, the Graf Creamery hopes to be just as successful in its growth as it has been in the past.



ALBERT & EMMA GRAF CIRCA 1950
(The office for the Graf Creamery in 1950 was the extension of their home above)