

Cheese Factories in Livonia

Between 1873 and 1907 there were twenty cheese makers in Livonia Township. The 1876 map shows a factory at Newburg and Base Line Road, a factory on Seven Mile east of Newburg, a factory on Six Mile between Merriman and Middle Belt and one at Elm. I.F. Baker was listed in the 1876 atlas as a cheese maker, but this is not noted on the map. Harry Wolfe and the Dietrich family both tell of a factory at Gill Road and Seven Mile.

In 1880, according to the manufacturers census thirteen people were employed in the Livonia Township cheese factories. All the cheese makers were farmers and cheese making was just one of their activities.

The cheese factory on the Power farm at Newburg and Base Line Road was the largest factory in the township. It operated between 1876 and 1905. The factory was started in the spring of 1876. In 1880, seven people were employed by Mr. Power. Skilled labor was paid \$2.00 per day and unskilled labor was paid \$1.00 per day. Cheddar cheese was made and sold for 9 cents a pound. It cost \$2.00 per hundred pounds to make. Cheese was made from April to November and the other months the cream was used for butter. The production for that year was 244,139 pounds of cheese.

Volney Gunning, a Livonia famer, sold the milk from his Holsteins to the Power Cheese Factory. His income from the milk he sold to the Power Cheese Factory was about \$250.00 a year.

In the 1890's, this factory produced from 300,000 to 400,000 pounds of cheese annually.

The cheese factory on Seven Mile east of Newburg in section 9 was known as the Gilt Edge Factory. It was in operation in 1873. George Kator leased land to David Wildey in February of 1874. In 1881, the property was sold to Asa B. Smith and in September of 1898 a piece of land about $\frac{3}{4}$ acres, 9 rods x 14 rods was leased to Frank Bradley for 99 years. This lease was transferred to Elmer W. Garchow in June of 1920.

In his diary, Volney Gunning tells about a fire which took place in 1883 on the Asa B. Smith farm in which his cheese factory, cow barn, two grain barns and corn houses, 12 acres of oats, 26 acres of wheat and 80 tons of hay burned when the oat stack caught fire from the steam thresher.

In 1890, the Gilt Edge factory produced 100,000 pounds of cheese.

The Livonia Cheese Factory on Six Mile between Merriman and Middle Belt was first operated by Samuel B. Smith. He was known as Squire Smith. He studied law and advised many. He also served as township supervisor in 1868 and 1869.

Between 1887 and 1891, a factory was operated by Frederick West. He came to Livonia from New York in 1871. Most of the cheese was sold in Detroit. The annual capacity of cheese production was 150,000 pounds.

Otto Ziegler operated a cheese factory between 1893 to 1901.

John Joslin and William Allen were both listed as cheese manufacturers in the 1880 manufacturers census. They both employed three people and used steam power to manufacture their cheese. John Joslin made 14,000 pounds of cheese which he sold for 10 cents a pound.

The cheese factory at Seven Mile and Gill Road was operated by Frank Bradley. He came from England in 1885 and once a week he went by horse and wagon to the city where he sold most of his cheese.

In 1884, there were 62 butter and cheese factories in Michigan. Sixteen people were employed in the 6 Wayne County cheese factories. Three of these factories were in Livonia Township. At this time, there were 10 factories in Lenawee County and six factories each in Eaton and Genesee counties.

In 1894, there were 221 butter and cheese establishments in Michigan. In Wayne County, 10 establishments employed 49 people. Three of these establishments were in Livonia Township and employed 7 people. The factories worked nine months a year and used steam power.

Farmers in England and Scotland had made cheese for several centuries. The term cheddar came from a town near Bristol. The factory system of making cheese started in America. Americans manufactured cheese from their surplus milk.

Jesse Williams of Oneida County, New York was the first cheese factory operator in 1851. The first factory in Ohio was in 1860 and 1864 in Wisconsin.

A model cheese factory at the turn of the century would consist of four areas. The making room would be about 30' x 30', the curing room would be two stories about 20' x 40', the boiler room would be about 10' x 16', and the office would be about 10 square feet.

Two processes were used to make cheese. When making cheese by the granular form from the time they whey was drawn until it was put in the press. When the matting method was used, the curd was allowed to mat into a solid mass as soon as the whey was removed. Later this mass was milled to get it into the right condition for salting before pressing. Before pressing, the curd would be cooled to between 80°F or 85°F. The press room temperature would usually be at 70°F. Cheese cures slowly at low temperatures and improves in flavor and texture. Cheese is kept at 15°F for 5 months. At 60°F or 65°F cheese cures faster but a temperature of 70°F will injure the texture and flavor of the cheese.

Cheese was packaged in a variety of sizes. Found common sizes for cheese were: 9 pounds Young Americans, 20 pounds Daisies, 30 pounds flats, 60 pounds cheddars.