

## Milk Products, Inc., Plant In Chilton, WI, Celebrates Century Of Manufacturing

**Chilton, WI**—The product mix, names, and owners have changed several times over the years but what is currently the Milk Products, Inc. plant in downtown Chilton has been in business for just over 100 years.

The century of dairy product manufacturing at the site was celebrated at a recent open house and commemorative program.

For the occasion, tributes were given by Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade, and Consumer Protection Secretary Ben Brancel and Wisconsin's 64th Alice in Dairyland Katie Wirkus. Remarks were also presented by company president Dave Kuehnel.

Milk Products has owned the plant since 1992, when it took over the operation that had begun to specialize in the production of milk replacer and other feed grade milk powder products in 1979. Before then, the business was owned and operated by the well-known Carnation Co., which made human grade food products, mainly evaporated milk and then milk replacer.

The basic system that Carnation developed to hydrate and instantize milk is largely in place today for making powdered feeds for animals. Suited for more than a dozen animal species and custom made for sale under its own and other brand names, the Milk Products lineup consists of milk replacers, colostrum supplements, and animal health products.

Milk Products makes more than 700 products overall that are sold to independent feed manufacturers and wholesale distributors. In addition to the lineup of products for dairy and beef calves, Milk Products makes supplements or milk replacers for kid goats, lambs, foals, piglets, llama and alpaca crias, elk calves, deer fawns, puppies, kittens, poultry, and adult animals.

Carnation's decision in 1911 to buy what was then the Calumet Cold Storage property marked the start of dairy product manufacturing at the site which is adjacent to a branch of the Manitowoc River. Its location next to a railroad was another attraction for Carnation, which undertook construction there in July of 1911 and began production about three years later.

The origin of the Carnation Co. dates to the founding of the Pacific Coast Condensed Milk Co. by E. A. (Elbridge Amos) Stuart at Kent, WA in August of 1899. It made canned, evaporated milk for human consumption that was sold in grocery stores in the Pacific Northwest.

Eager for quality milk to make the company's products, Stuart and Carnation established a dairy operation in Washington (in a town renamed from Tolt to Carnation) to provide purebred bulls to the dairy farmers who were supplying milk to the company. Stuart chose the Carna-

tion name after seeing it used in conjunction with a display of cigars in a tobacco store in downtown Seattle.

With the success of the business in the Northwest, Stuart decided there was also an opportunity to establish a customer base in the Midwest. Stuart's company, which did not change its name to Carnation until 1916, bought a parcel of land from Bernard Vogt in March of 1911 and then purchased the cold storage plant from Frank Tesch and a Mr. Freund on July 12, 1911, according to the "Tales of Old Chilton" book.

The cold storage facility here was not officially in Chilton but rather at the western edge of the unincorporated community of Gravesville in the adjacent town of Charlestown. The dairy manufacturing plant was not annexed to the city of Chilton until 1971.

According to the August 1914 issue of "The Creamery and Milk Plant Monthly," construction work on what was then still the Pacific Coast Condensed Milk Company's new plant here was nearly completed. The modifications and additions to the existing storage facility set the stage for 40 years of the production of condensed milk at the plant.

The Carnation plant here made evaporated milk until October 1, 1954, when a switch was made to producing the Carnation Instant Milk that had been invented earlier in the year. That instantized, powdered milk was packaged in the once very familiar red and white boxes.

Another change occurred at the plant in 1978. That was when production transitioned from human grade foods to the manufacture of milk replacer for dairy calves and other animals.

"Suckle" was a popular brand name for those animal grade products. Carnation developed a milk replacer for calves in the early 1950s and manufactured it at a plant in Missouri before moving that production to Chilton in 1978 as part of its transition from the production of human grade foods.

Nestle SA's purchase of the Carnation Co., including its feed business, in 1985 soon led to a change in the ownership and the name at the Chilton plant. That was because Nestle was interested in food manufacturing and brands rather than in the animal feed sector.

As a result, there was a management-led buyout in 1986 of Nestle's feed division that was based at Los Angeles. The new company, which had the name Manna Pro, included the Chilton facility.

This arrangement continued until 1992, when Manna Pro was sold to a privately held company. Milk Products Inc. remains with this ownership today and caters its sales to the independent sector of the baby ani-

mal feed market rather than to the segment held by cooperatives, Kuehnel indicated.

In 1996, Milk Products purchased the Sav-A-Caf brand product family which today is a house brand that it sells throughout the US. Milk Products is the only manufacturer of baby animal nutrition products in North America with an International Organization for Standardization (ISO) certification. It is also certified by Safe Feed/Safe Food and the Facility Certification Institute.

During its 100 years here, employment at the plant has ranged from 16 to 120 and is currently at 62 for the production and office staff, Kuehnel said. He quipped that the brief shutdown of the plant for the open house and commemorative ceremony was only the second time that production was halted during his nearly 20 years at the plant.

At the ceremony, Kuehnel observed that an ongoing multi-million dollar upgrade to improve the efficiency of mixing, batching, and bin use at the plant uncovered some surprises about the construction project a century ago.

When a portion of a wood beam was removed to accommodate the current remodeling, it was discovered that it was made from a redwood tree and was probably shipped here from Washington or elsewhere on the West Coast. **CR**

## Friendly Ice Cream Corp. Emerges From Chapter 11

**Wilbraham, MA**—Friendly Ice Cream Corporation and its subsidiaries announced this week that the company has successfully emerged from its voluntary Chapter 11 by consummating the sale of its business to Friendly's Ice Cream, LLC, and its subsidiaries.

Friendly Ice Cream Corporation and subsidiaries, the operator of Friendly's restaurants and a nationwide distributor of ice cream products, had filed to reorganize under Chapter 11 on October 5, 2011, in the United States Bankruptcy Court for the District of Delaware.

Since entering Chapter 11, Friendly's has initiated a comprehensive turnaround strategy designed to improve operations across all business segments.

Turnaround efforts include improvements in customer satisfaction and speed of service, menu enhancements, further partnership with new and existing franchisees, expansion of the retail business, and other investments in overall guest experience.

Friendly's Ice Cream LLC is a new, vertically integrated restaurant company serving sandwiches, entrees and ice cream desserts, with distribution through over 7,500 retail locations. **CR**

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