

The Colorado Condensed Milk Company

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Parish House Museum Director



In 1910, Lottie Parish, the only daughter of town founders Harvey and Mary Parish, had the honor of scooping up the first shovel-full of dirt and tossing it aside in a ceremonial groundbreaking for what would become the Colorado Condensed Milk Company plant in Johnstown.



The condensery was organized by area businessmen and farmers through a tentative agreement with the Mohawk Condensed Milk Company. The plan was that when the new dairy farmers could collectively produce and deliver a specified volume of milk each day to the new plant, Mohawk would take over its operation. It wasn't long before the farmers met and sustained the quota and the Johnstown plant became a permanent fixture at 310 West 1st St.

This was the beginning of the dairy industry in Northern Colorado, and it created stable year-round employment for many of Johnstown's 200 residents and dairy farmers as well as a solid tax base for the Town budget. Many of the plant's employees stayed on for 30 or more years before retirement.

Willard Letford, who was the president of the First National Bank of Johnstown, was among the men responsible for bringing the condensery to town. He had spent weeks traveling around the area signing up people for dairy farming, lending money to establish their herds, and in general, making people aware of the then young Mohawk Milk Company's intention to take over the plant's operation.

A bank worker would drop Letford off at a farm in the morning with instructions to pick him up at another location in the evening. He walked all day, going from farm to farm, talking to farmers and asking them to commit to buying a certain number of milk cows. After signing up, large numbers of Guernsey and Holstein cows were shipped to local farmers from Wisconsin and Minnesota.

Even though Mohawk took over the operation of the condensery, it was always called the Colorado Condensed Milk Company. Mohawk's Colorado operations consisted of plants in Loveland and Platteville that pasteurized the milk and trucked it to Johnstown or Fort Lupton where it was condensed and canned.

In 1921, Mohawk sold its Colorado plants to the Carnation Milk Company, and at some point, the Johnstown plant became part of Columbine Milk, a trademark of Carnation. The plant closed in 1977 after 66 years. Uniscope, Inc., an animal feed products company, purchased the building in 1979 and still operates there today.



The Historic Parish House and Museum

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